

# MEDICATION SAFETY

## MEDICATIONS AND AGING

- Many seniors have multiple medical problems, which result in large numbers of medications being prescribed. Add to this over-the-counter drugs and supplements, and the result is many people taking more than 10 pills a day.
- The more medication someone takes the more potential there is for drug interactions, dosing mistakes, and side effects.
- The top two medication mistakes are forgetting to take a drug OR forgetting it was taken and taking it a second or even third time. This can lead to severe side effects.
- Aging kidneys and liver are less effective at filtering medications out of the blood, which can lead to toxic levels.
- Ongoing monitoring by the provider is necessary to reinforce safety with medications.

## SAFETY TIPS FOR MANAGING MEDICATIONS

- A medication bag is given at the first appointment. Use the bag to bring prescription medications to all future appointments, along with a current list of over-the-counter medications and supplements. Confirming valuable information on the prescription bottle is one way to minimize medication errors.
- Do not make changes to medications; always call the office to discuss concerns with dosage or administration times.
- All medications prescribed by MMC providers should be managed by the MMC team. If a medication or dose is changed by another doctor, please notify our office before proceeding.
- Never give a person medication prescribed for someone else.
- Pharmacists are a valuable resource for medication questions.
- Let the pharmacist know if a medication dose is changed or a medication is stopped.

## SAFETY TIPS FOR TAKING MEDICATIONS

- Write out a complete medication schedule.
- Use a weekly pill organizer.
- Fill the pill organizer every Sunday.
- After filling the pill organizer, keep the medication bottles out of sight and even locked away from where the pill organizer is kept.
- Spot check the pill organizer during the week to be certain medications are being taken as prescribed.
- Discuss with the provider or nurse any dose timing issues that may be over-complicating the medication regimen. Some medications can be dosed twice daily instead of three times daily, which can ease the medication administration routine.
- Medications no longer in use should be safely discarded or locked away for future use if necessary.
- If a weekly pill organizer is not effective, speak to your provider or nurse about other strategies to use.
- An updated medication list will be provided after each appointment at MMC. Keep this list in the binder and record any changes between appointments. The sheet can also be used to record any side effects to report at the next visit.
- A written medication list or photo of the list kept on a cell phone can be helpful for emergencies — just be sure to keep these lists updated.
- If swallowing is difficult, talk to the provider or nurse about using medication patches, changing to liquid form, or crushing medications and putting them in food.