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Senior Safety News

The focus of this issue is prescription management. As you know, prescription drugs are a major factor in increasing longevity. At the same time, they are a major cause of falls and fires.

“Almost one third of seniors take more than five prescription drugs, and more than half rely on a combination of five or more on a combination of five or more drugs, over-the-counter drugs and dietary supplements.”



This situation can lead to effects that can alter perception, balance and mood.

In order to stay safe, you need to become aware of your medications and their effects.

Your allies in staying aware and informed are your doctor and your pharmacist.

Write down your prescriptions and keep track of your use.

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Seniors Mixing Prescription and O.T.C. Drugs

By RONI CARYN RABIN

Published: January 8, 2009

Almost 70 percent of older adults who take prescription medications also use non-prescription drugs, dietary supplements or both, researchers have reported, and one in 25 older adults is at risk of suffering a bad reaction to a poor combination of drugs.

Older people also are using more medications than in the past, the scientists also found. Almost one third take more than five prescription drugs, and more than half rely on a combination of five or more prescription drugs, over-the-counter drugs and dietary supplements.

The study, published recently in the Journal of the American Medical Association, analyzed a nationally representative sample of more than 3,000 adults, ages 57 to 85, who were surveyed between June 2005 and March 2006.



The analysis found that more than 90 percent of older adults were regularly taking at least one medication, usually a prescription drug, and nearly half regularly used an over-the-counter drug or dietary supplement. Prescription drug use increased with age and was highest among those ages 75 to 85.

Among the findings:

* Some 68 percent of those who were taking a prescription medicine also were using an additional over-the-counter drug, dietary supplement or both.

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- * Nearly half of the potential drug-drug interactions identified by the researchers involved the use of anticoagulants like warfarin along with antiplatelet drugs like aspirin.
- * More than half of the potential adverse interactions involved use of two over-the-counter substances, like ginkgo biloba and aspirin.
- * Women were more likely to use prescription medications and dietary supplements, but men were more likely to suffer from an adverse drug interaction.
- * Even though men and women reported similar rates of cardiovascular disease, far fewer women were taking cholesterol-lowering statins.
- * Older Hispanics were less likely than other groups to be taking medications.

“People may perceive drugs that they can obtain without a prescription as safer than prescription drugs, but what makes them less safe is that no one knows you’re taking them,” said Dr. Stacy Tessler Lindau, assistant professor of obstetrics and gynecology and medicine-geriatrics at the University of Chicago Medical Center and a senior author of the paper.



Elderly people who purchase over-the-counter drugs, she added, “should get in the habit of buying them at the pharmacy counter and ask the pharmacist, ‘How will this interact with the other drugs I’m taking?’”

..... Source: *New York Times*

Safety Tips for Senior Citizens, Caregivers in Managing Drugs

More than 2.3 million drug-related errors adversely affect older Americans each year, often resulting in rush trips to the emergency room, expensive hospitalization and subsequently, the potential decline of a senior citizen’s independence. There are specific precautions seniors, their adult children and caregivers can take to prevent mishaps related to prescription use, says a company that manages prescription drug benefits.

“Some older Americans, who may be taking six to ten medications at one time, as well as their adult children and caregivers, may be unaware of potentially harmful drug interactions or side effects,” said Joseph Addi

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ego, M.D., Prescription Solutions' chief medical officer. "Safety is also compromised when people try to save money by reducing a dosage, sharing or hoarding drugs, or even not filling a prescription because of the cost. These actions can cause serious health consequences."

National Patient Safety Week is March 6-12, and the experts at Prescription Solutions, including more than 150 pharmacists, nurses and physicians, recommend the following steps for seniors, their families and caregivers to make sure they are using prescription drugs properly and economizing in ways that are safe and not harmful:



Ten Tips for managing prescriptions safely:

- 1) Bring current prescription medications at least once a year to your primary care doctor's office and have them reviewed to verify that each medication is still useful and appropriate, and to ensure that the combination of medications is safe.
- 2) Store medications properly at home. Most people keep medications in the bathroom medicine cabinet, where they can get damp and lose potency. A dry place such as a kitchen cabinet or bedroom is a better storage location as long as the medications are out of reach of children or safely locked away.
- 3) Keep the appropriate medication in the correct bottle. Don't mix different medications in the same bottle to save space or for traveling, for example.
- 4) Check medications several times a year to make sure they have not expired.
- 5) Dispose of old and expired medications properly by flushing them down a toilet. Don't throw them in the trash where a child might find and ingest them.
- 6) Develop a relationship with your local pharmacist to consult with questions about the proper use of medications and possible drug interactions. If you are using a mail order pharmacy, you can consult with one of the pharmacists by phone.



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7) For chronic conditions, find out if your benefit program offers a mail order pharmacy for refills of medications used to treat them. Mail service offers a number of attractive features for seniors, such as:

- * Safety. Because the mail service facility will have a record of other prescriptions that you are taking, pharmacists can check for potential drug interactions before a drug is dispensed.

- * Cost savings. By ordering from mail service, seniors can receive a 90-day supply of medications for treatments of chronic conditions versus the typical 30-days supplied by local retail pharmacies, thus saving money by having fewer co-pays when prescriptions are filled.

- * Convenience. Drugs can be ordered from the mail service pharmacy by telephone, mail or online - a great convenience for many seniors whose mobility may be limited.

8) Find out from your pharmacist or physician about the possibility of taking generic drugs as opposed to brand-name drugs. A generic drug that is deemed therapeutically equivalent to a brand-name drug may be considerably more affordable.

9) Check with your health plan or pharmacy to see if they offer other cost-saving opportunities such as discount cards for prescriptions or over-the-counter medications at the local pharmacy.

10) Although it may appear to be an attractive way to save money, do not order drugs from unknown Web sites. Order only from a Web site through your own health plan or retail pharmacy that provides password protection for its members. Unknown Internet pharmacies may not be licensed or staffed by actual pharmacists, and there are no guarantees that the medications will be effective, be the correct dose, or even be the drug they are advertised to be.



.....Source: www.seniorjournal.com

For more information on prescription management please visit Senior [Safety Online](#) and you can download our [Prescription Scheduler](#) and [Prescription Workbook](#).