

EXPERT OPINION on medications and aging

“Older persons and their caregivers should take an active interest in learning about the short- and long-term benefits and risks of their prescription and over-the-counter medications. Doctors and pharmacists can help seniors to avoid adverse drug reactions and to identify safe, effective treatment approaches.”

— Colleen Maxwell, PhD

Where can you get more information?

For more information contact:

- ▶ Your family doctor or nurse practitioner
- ▶ Your local pharmacist
- ▶ Telehealth Ontario: 1-866-797-0000

And use the Internet:

- ▶ National Advisory Council on Aging:
www.naca-ccnta.ca/expression/15-1/pdf/exp15-1_e.pdf
- ▶ Canadian Health Network:
www.canadian-health-network.ca



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- Primary Health Care Transition Fund
- Homewood Research Institute, Guelph, ON
- Department of Health Studies and Gerontology
University of Waterloo, Waterloo, ON
www.ideas.uwaterloo.ca/interRAI

Give Your Pills a Check-up! Medication Safety



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Give Your Pills a Check-up!

Medication Safety

What is a medication review?

Your doctor or pharmacist will review all the drugs you are taking. Bring all your prescription drugs, over-the-counter medications, vitamins, and natural remedies with you. (Make sure you bring the containers if you still have them.)

Your doctor or pharmacist will go through all your medications to make sure that they are right for you. You will be asked how often you actually take your medications and whether you are experiencing any possible side effects.

In some cases, your doctor may choose to stop an old drug that you no longer need, change your prescription to a more effective drug, simplify your prescriptions to make them easier to take, or suggest alternative treatment approaches.

Why is a medication review important?

One doctor or pharmacist should review all of your medications because:

- ▶ you may have been prescribed different medications by different doctors
- ▶ you may have purchased over-the-counter medications or natural remedies that have powerful effects on your health
- ▶ some of your medications could cause adverse reactions
- ▶ your medications may be harmful if they interact with:
 - food
 - alcohol
 - other medications



You should have a medication review if you ...

- ▶ take several medications every day
- ▶ have prescription drugs from more than one doctor
- ▶ are concerned about side effects
- ▶ have had a recent change in health status
- ▶ feel the schedule for taking your medications is too complicated
- ▶ are unable to take the medications exactly as prescribed by your doctor
- ▶ have not had all of your medications reviewed by a doctor in the last six months

What other steps should you take?

- ▶ Fill all your prescriptions at the same pharmacy so your pharmacist can alert you to dangerous combinations.
- ▶ Ask your doctor or pharmacist about what each drug does and about possible adverse reactions.
- ▶ Never change your drugs without discussing it with your doctor first.