

Managing medication for loved ones

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Some older people struggle with remembering to take their medications or organizing them effectively. Adult children, like yourself, can help by taking steps to monitor and update medication lists. Doing this can help prevent potential health complications, while also providing peace of mind for both you and your mom.

The most common [medication](#)-related problems in [older adults](#) include

taking too high or too low of a dose, taking unnecessary medications, not taking medication as directed or at all, taking an ineffective medication, or [adverse drug reactions](#) such as confusion, bleeding and over-sedation.

In addition, certain medications require special monitoring. Medications used to control pain, anxiety, mood and sleep pose the largest risk for patients as they age. Medications for [blood pressure](#) and diabetes also can be problematic if they are not monitored closely and adjusted as [health conditions](#) change.

Every person's medication needs are different. The risk for medication-related problems increases with each medication that is added. If your mom takes four or more medications, she has a higher risk for medication-related problems especially falls.

Six tips for helping with medications:

- Gather information about the medications used. Get an up-to-date medication lists from the health care team. Make sure that this list matches the prescription containers in the home. Then talk through each medication so both of you fully understand what it is taken for, how often and at what dose.
- Contact the pharmacy about available medication management services. Many pharmacies offer individual dose, or compliance packaging, options. This is a low-cost way to help patients better manage daily medications and it offers a way for [family members](#) to double-check on doses that may have been missed. If your pharmacy doesn't offer this service, use a medication planner. This is a plastic organizer that stores scheduled doses of medications and makes it easier to keep on top of which medication to take and when.
- Contact the pharmacy about medication synchronization. Medication synchronization allows patients to fill most

medications at one time every 30 or 90 days, instead of refill cycles scattered throughout the month. This may help simplify and organize medications.

- Request access to their [medical records](#). If something goes wrong and they need extra help, having digital access to their medical records can help you get in touch with the primary care clinician or pharmacist to assist.
- Schedule a visit with a pharmacist. A comprehensive medication review can be scheduled through your loved one's primary care clinician's office. You can ask for a referral during a visit or call the scheduling line and ask for a referral. During the visit, a clinical pharmacist will review the medication lists to ensure all the medications are prescribed correctly.
- Talk with a pharmacist before adding vitamins and supplements. Even though these products can be purchased over the counter without a prescription, there are still important interaction concerns with some medications. Talk with a health care professional or pharmacist before adding vitamins, [herbal remedies](#) or supplements to your loved one's medication regimen.

As a caregiver, it's important that you take time for self-care and recharging so that you can continue to give. Pay attention to how you feel emotionally and physically. If you need a break or would like assistance, ask family members or other loved ones for help. There are many caregiving resources in the community that can help your mom with needed services or additional support.

The best measure of caregiver success is if you did your best with what you had available at that moment. Remember, you don't have to do it alone.

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