

Medicines and Your Health

- Follow your medical or mental health providers' directions regarding medicines.
- Do not stop medicines without first checking with your medical or mental health provider.
- Do not restart medicines without first checking with your doctor.
- Do not skip or double up on your medicines.
- Make sure your medicines have not expired. Check the dates!
- Check with your pharmacist before drinking alcohol when taking prescription medicines.
- Tell your doctor about ALL medicines you are taking, including over-the-counter vitamins.

Green Flags — All Clear



If you have:

- No side effects with medicine(s)
- Take your medicine(s) as prescribed
- Are getting your medicine(s) filled regularly

What this means ...

- Good work!
- Your symptoms are under control

Keep up the great work!

Yellow Flags — Caution



If you have:

- Problems taking your medicines as prescribed by your medical provider; missing or skipping doses
- Have difficulty understanding your medicine directions
- Trouble urinating
- Constipation or diarrhea
- Side effects like fatigue, weakness, dizziness, swelling of hands or feet
- Stomach upset or abdominal pain
- Blurred vision
- Dark, tarry stools, or noticeable blood in your stool
- Ringing in the ears
- Feeling “off balance”
- Excessively sleepy
- “Foggy thinking”

What this means ...

- You may need further education or support on medication management
- You could be having a side effect to the medicine
- Your medicine(s) may need adjustment
- The medicine may be affecting your digestive system

Call your doctor, consulting nurse, or health care provider if symptoms do not improve.

Name:

Number:

Instructions:

If you notice a Yellow Flag, work closely with your health care team.

Red Flags — Stop and Think



If you:

- Have loss of consciousness or fainting
- Develop a rash
- Cannot urinate
- Do not have a bowel movement, particularly when taking a narcotic for 3 or more days
- Blurred vision
- Vomiting blood

What this means ...

You need to be evaluated by a health care professional immediately.

If possible, notify your health care provider's office.

Name:

Number:

Follow these instructions: CALL 9-1-1

If you notice a Red Flag, CALL 911. Emergency!

Medicine Fast Facts

- About two-thirds of emergency hospitalizations among the elderly can be attributed to four commonly prescribed medicines:
 1. Warfarin (Coumadin): accounted for 33 percent of the cases
 2. Insulin: accounted for 14 percent of the cases
 3. Antiplatelet drugs: accounted for 13 percent
 4. Oral diabetic medicines; accounted for 11 percent of the cases.
- Certain medicines require blood testing and dosing changes so closely with your doctor to ensure you are having the necessary blood testing as recommended.
- Prescription medicines can improve the symptoms of a disorder and improve the quality of life; however, they also have the potential to cause dangerous side effects. Since our bodies change with age, medicine dosages, interval and duration of treatment need adjustment. Just because you started on one dosage does not mean you will stay on that dosage forever.
- Your brain and nervous system become more sensitive over time and therefore taking certain medicines, particularly pain medicines and sleeping medicines need careful monitoring.
- Liver and kidney function decline as you age and therefore you may need a lower dose of medicine over time.
- If you take medicines to treat anxiety, depression, other mental health issues, allergies, nausea, and pain know that they can all cause sedation, confusion, and other side effects. Take medicines only as prescribed.
- Usually medicines should be taken with a full glass of water, unless your doctor or pharmacist recommend otherwise. If the prescription recommends “plenty of water”, make sure you are drinking at least one full glass of water unless your doctor directs otherwise.
- Follow directions as to “how” your medicine(s) should be taken. If taken with food, a piece of bread, cracker, or banana can help it get to your stomach faster. Talk with your doctor or pharmacist when you have questions.
- List all of your medications—including over-the-counter vitamins and supplements—with the name, dose, how often it is taken, and why you take it. Carry this list with you whenever you visit a health care provider or pharmacist.



Aging and Disability Services

Aging and Disability Services (ADS)—the Area Agency on Aging for King County— plans, coordinates, and advocates for comprehensive services for older adults, family caregivers, and people with disabilities throughout Seattle and King County.

For more information, call 1-844-348-5464 or e-mail info@communitylivingconnections.org



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