

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 doctors and pharmacist about ALL medicines you are taking, including over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and supplements.

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!
- Continue following up with your health care provider as recommended.

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
- Fatigue, weakness, dizziness, swelling of hands or feet
- Stomach upset or abdominal pain
- Dark, tarry stools, or noticeable blood in your stool
- Ringing in the ears or blurry vision
- Feeling “off balance”
- Excessive sleepiness
- “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 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
- Difficulty breathing or develop a painful or blistering rash
- Shallow or slowed breathing
- Sudden inability to urinate
- No bowel movements, for 7 or more days, especially if also abdominal pain, fever, or vomiting
- Loss of or sudden change in vision
- Blood in your vomit
- Severe abdominal or chest pain

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 9-1-1. Emergency!



Medicine Fast Facts

Becoming an Age-Friendly Health System provides a set of four evidence-based elements of high-quality care, known as the “4Ms,” to all older adults. The 4Ms represent a broad shift by health systems to focus on the needs of older adults. The 4Ms are Medications, Mentation, Mobility, and What Matters.

- About two-thirds of emergency hospitalizations among the elderly can be attributed to four commonly prescribed medicines/classes of medicines:
 1. Warfarin (Coumadin): accounted for 33 percent of the cases
 2. Insulin: accounted for 14 percent of the cases
 3. Oral antiplatelet medicines: accounted for 13 percent
 4. Oral antidiabetic medicines: accounted for 11 percent of the cases.
- Certain medicines require blood testing and dosing changes. Work 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 may affect you differently. You may need to change dosages, how often you take it and how long you take it. Your brain and nervous system become more sensitive over time. If you are taking certain medicines, particularly pain medicines and sleeping medicines, you need careful monitoring.
- Liver and kidney function decline as you age making it more difficult to clear medications from your body. Therefore, you may need a lower dose of medicine over time.
- Many medications that treat anxiety, depression, other mental health conditions, allergies, nausea, and pain may 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 recommends otherwise.
- Follow directions as to “how” your medicine(s) should be taken. For example, if instructed to take with food this may help to improve absorption or reduce side effects such as stomach upset or bleeds. Talk with your doctor or pharmacist when you have questions.
- List all your medications—including over-the-counter medications, 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 so they can check for drug interactions.

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 information about services or interpretation assistance, call 844-348-5464 or e-mail info@communitylivingconnections.org.



Aging and Disability Services
700 Fifth Avenue, 51st Floor * PO Box 34215
Seattle, WA 98124-4215
Tel. 206-684-0660 * TTY: 206-684-0702
aginginfo@seattle.gov