

Medication Dos and Don'ts

When doctors prescribe medication, they take into account a person's illness, overall condition, weight, the chemicals in the medication, the proper dosage and any possible side effects. Therefore, make sure, when you are caring for a person, that medication is taken exactly how and when a doctor instructs. Any deviation can be dangerous.

The following are some general guidelines for overseeing someone's medication usage. Remember: if you have any questions at all, always ask a doctor or pharmacist.



Do store medications in a cool, dry, dark place, away from children.



Don't give medications meant for one person to another.

DOS

- ✓ Only give medication that has been prescribed.
- ✓ Follow the prescription instructions exactly—including dosage and schedule.
- ✓ Tell the doctor about any other drugs (including over-the-counter drugs) the patient is taking.
- ✓ Ask the doctor about possible side effects, about drug or food interactions, and whether or not the medication should be taken with meals or during the night.
- ✓ Buy all medication from the same pharmacy or drug store; this way, possible drug interactions with previously prescribed drugs can be considered.
- ✓ Follow the full course of drug treatment; do not stop giving the medication until the treatment is over. Some medications must be taken regularly for the rest of the patient's life.
- ✓ Keep an eye out for side effects—including sleeplessness or sleepiness, depression, confusion, irritability, headaches or nausea.
- ✓ Use a pill reminder box and/or a daily medicine chart to keep track of multiple medications, dosages and schedules.
- ✓ Check with the doctor periodically to see if the medication can be stopped or cut back.

DON'TS

- ✗ Don't change the form of a medication (i.e., crushing a pill or mixing one with water) unless you ask the doctor or pharmacist. Changing the form of a medication can change how it works or its effectiveness.
- ✗ Don't move medicines from the original pill bottle to another.
- ✗ Don't stop giving a medication, even if the person begins to feel better; finish the entire course of treatment as prescribed by doctor.
- ✗ Don't assume that your care recipient is taking medications properly; discuss medications, dosages, schedules and side effects with them on a regular basis, and communicate directly with the person's doctor, if needed.
- ✗ Don't try to second-guess a doctor about the medication a patient does or does not need; always discuss problems or questions with the doctor.