



Use Medication Wisely

According to Health Canada, seniors constitute 12% of our population but receive 28% to 40% of all prescribed medications. The result is that seniors are more exposed to the risk of adverse reactions from the misuse of drugs.

We tend to think the word "drug" means a substance prescribed by our doctor. Non-prescription substances such as laxatives, cough/cold medicines, aspirin, coffee, tea, alcohol and tobacco are also drugs. Every drug affects us in different ways at different times. By middle age many of us are taking at least one medication on a regular basis. This number tends to increase as we grow older. In Canada one in four hospital admissions of patients over 50 years old is due to drug misuse.

One important way we can safe-guard our health is to use medication wisely by following the ten tips below:

Tips

1. Be sure each of your doctors and pharmacists know ALL the drugs (prescription and non-prescription) you are taking so drug interactions can be minimized or avoided.
2. Talk to your doctor about alternatives to medication use. Medications may not always be the best solution to your health.
3. Be sure you know when and how to take your medication.
4. Take medication exactly as instructed by your doctor/pharmacist.
5. Ask your doctor/pharmacist if you have questions about possible side effects and when you should start to see improvement in your health.
6. Finish your medications even if you feel better before it's gone.
7. Don't lend your medication to others even if their health problem sounds like yours. It may not be the same. Also, we react differently to the same medication.
8. If you react to a medication, call your doctor immediately.
9. Check the expiration date and ask how/where to store it.
10. Don't mix alcohol and other drugs unless your doctor says it's all right to do so.