

Welcome

We're going digital

Caring for health will soon be an entirely digital newsletter, making it even easier to share stories and tips with family and friends. We'll let you know when it will go live so you will have plenty of time to sign up.

Go with us

The information in this newsletter is for educational purposes only and should not replace the advice or treatment from your doctor or licensed medical clinician.

Humana is a Medicare Advantage HMO, PPO and PFFS organization and a stand-alone prescription drug plan with a Medicare contract. Enrollment in any Humana plan depends on contract renewal.



Humana®

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Health and wellness or prevention information

Caring for health

Resources for friends and family
SPRING 2017

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Medication basics

Be smart and safe

Medicine can help when used the right way—or hurt when taken the wrong way. Help the person you care for take medicines safely and as directed by following these four easy steps:

1. Get organized. Make accurate records, noting whether a prescription is a brand name or a generic medicine. Include vitamins, supplements and any allergies to medicines. Keep the record up-to-date.
2. Give the medicine chest a checkup. Look for and throw out any old or expired medicines, and any that are no longer needed.
3. Know and follow doctor’s orders when it comes to your loved one’s medicines.
4. Make sure your loved one’s primary doctor knows about other medicines he or she is taking, including those prescribed by other doctors. These may be fine, or they may react badly with other medicines. Ask the doctor or pharmacist.

No one expects you to become a medicine expert. But it’s a good idea to know what medicines are prescribed for your loved one, what they do and what side effects they may have.

Get more tips on how to take medicines, including how to store them the right way. See www.nihseniorhealth.gov and search: “Take Charge of Your Medicines.”

Here’s help to make caregiving easier: Caregiver’s Toolkit
Humana.com/learning-center/caregiver/caregiver-resources



When medicines may harm

A new prescription led to a trip to the emergency room for Humana member Elizabeth F., of Ravenna, Ohio. “My regular asthma drug reacted badly with a new drug,” she says. Only after her doctor reviewed all of her medicines did he find the cause. Changing the new medicine stopped the problem.

More medicines may mean closer vigilance
Fourteen prescription medicines. That’s the average number taken in a single year by people between the ages of 65 and 69. It’s even higher – 18 – for those between the ages of 80 and 84.¹ That’s a lot of doses—and a lot of chances for dangerous mistakes, drug interactions and side effects.

“If you take just eight prescription medicines, for example, you have a 90 percent chance that at least two of those medicines will react with each other in a negative way,” says Amy Hurwitch, Humana program manager for adverse drug events.

¹ 12 Incredible Polypharmacy Statistics, www.healthresearchfunding.org/polypharmacy-statistics/, Sept. 3, 2014.

Spotlight on: Communication

Be the caregiver who talks with the docs


Chances are good the person you care for sees a doctor—and maybe more than one. So, your loved one may be taking a regular medicine—or more than one.

For help managing multiple medicines, speak with every healthcare provider who treats your loved one and might write a prescription. Each needs to know what other medicines your loved one takes and why, along with their scheduling.

That’s because medicines may interact with each other, possibly reducing effectiveness or increasing health risk. The pharmacist is also a vital link in this chain and can answer any questions about the differences between generic and brand name medicines, or how food can affect them.

Get tips on how to talk with your provider about lowering risks for taking medicines—and getting their full benefits—from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Learn more at fda.gov. Search: “Think it Through: Managing the Benefits and Risks of Medicines.”

Open the lines of communication with everyone who treats your loved one. That could include emergency room personnel, the staff handling a hospital-to-rehab move and those who manage the transition home.

 **One person caring about another represents life’s greatest value.”**

— Jim Rohn, *American entrepreneur, author and motivational speaker*



Take the right medicines, the right way

“Medication adherence” is a term you might hear doctors, nurses or pharmacists use. It means taking the right medicines, the right way.

It’s important. According to the FDA, “Poor adherence can interfere with the ability to treat many diseases, leading to greater complications from the illness and a lower quality of life for patients.” See fda.gov and search: “Are You Taking Medication as Prescribed?”

As a caregiver, you want to be sure your loved one takes the:

- Correct medicine—no confusion with old prescriptions or over-the-counter drugs
- Right dosage at the right time
- Medicine for as long as the doctor prescribes

You can help by organizing medicines, maybe in a seven-day pillbox. Routines, such as taking them with meals, can work. You can even set up reminders. Visit humana.com. Search “Drug Adherence.” Click “Taking Your Medicine.”

Medicine questions? Ask your doctor or pharmacist.

Caregiving Corner

Get and stay organized to manage medicines

As a caregiver, you may take your loved one to doctor appointments, keep track of medicines and oversee treatment. It can be a challenge to keep up with everything! Here are some tips to help.

Know which medicines your loved one takes

Without specific medical names of drugs, doctors cannot determine whether additional medicines they prescribe will interact with current medicines. Have a complete list of your loved one’s medicines at your fingertips. Find a medicine list worksheet at www.safemedication.com as well as useful information about medicines.

Know your loved one’s medical team

Your loved one may have three or four doctors, all for different reasons. Keep an ongoing list of doctor names and specialties, phone numbers and after-hours phone numbers available at all times.

Know your loved one’s health history

Most doctor appointments ask for complete health history, which includes medicines, allergies and all surgeries, no matter how minor. You should also include all diagnoses and medicines, including vitamins, supplements and over-the-counter (OTC) drugs, and your loved one’s reaction to any allergens.

If your loved one has had side effects resulting from a medicine in the past, like nausea or fatigue, note that as well to make sure that your loved one is getting the best possible care.



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