

# Injury Prevention Newsletter

## Colorado Trauma Network

### Medication Safety



Did you know that medications are one of the most common causes of increased fall risk in older adults?

Medication dosages, possible side effects, and medication effectiveness, are generally determined by studies done in relatively young, healthy people. Because our bodies and how we process medications change with age this may cause our bodies to react to drugs differently than when we were younger.

The aging process can affect how the medication is absorbed and utilized in the body. Changes that decrease your body's ability to break down or remove certain medications from your system may mean that medications can stay in your body longer.

Taking multiple medications can also affect how medications work in the body. Drug interactions happen when two or more medicines react with each other to cause unwanted effects. In this issue we will show you how proper medication management can reduce interactions and side effects that may lead to falls.



## What questions should I ask my doctor or pharmacist about my medications?

- What is this medicine for?
- What does this medicine do? What results can I expect?
- What are the side effects I might experience with this medication?
- Is this medication safe to take with my other medications, vitamins and supplements?
- When do I take it?
- Do I take this with food or on an empty stomach?
- How long will I have to take this medication?
- Are there things I need to avoid doing while taking this medication?
- What should I do if I miss a dose?





## Ask a Pharmacist

**Question:** Why is a pharmacist important to my overall health?

**Answer:** Pharmacists are well-versed in pharmacology, which is the branch of medicine that focuses on the uses and effects of drugs. Pharmacists understand the therapeutic roles of drugs and drug side effects and interactions with other drugs. Your pharmacist can help monitor these factors and which foods and activities can have an effect on your medications.

**Question:** What if medications make me too sleepy?

**Answer:** There are several prescription and over-the-counter medications that can make you drowsy, which can lead to issues with balance and falls. First and foremost, clarify with your primary care provider or pharmacist to see if your sedating medication(s) are necessary and that there are no other alternatives that may be less sedating. Second, because some of these medications can affect reaction times and other attention issues you should avoid activities such as driving. Dosing schedules are important when trying to avoid daytime drowsiness caused by certain medications. Clarify with your provider the time of day your medication should be taken.

**Question:** Why do some medications affect my bathroom habits?

**Answer:** People are typically on diuretics if their blood pressure is high or they have congestive heart failure. A diuretic medication removes fluid from the body, which helps reduce blood pressure. This can lead to frequent urination. Diarrhea is another common side effect of many medications. Antacids with magnesium, antibiotics and nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) medications are some of the most common medicines that induce loose, watery stools.

**Question:** Does it really matter what time of day I take my medications?

**Answer:** Yes, a dosing schedule is important. Every medication that you take has a specific dosing schedule — once a day, three times a day, etc. You should try to take your medication at the same time every day for the most beneficial and consistent effect of that medication. If the medication is discontinued by the doctor, that needs to be noted and followed.



"Right now I take a blue pill, a purple pill, an orange pill, a white pill, and a yellow pill. I need you to prescribe a green pill to complete my collection."



# Spring Cleaning Safety Tips

## The change of seasons often motivates a fresh start, and for many, that means one thing: Spring Cleaning.

As the temperatures begin to rise, now's the perfect time to pull back the curtains, open up the windows and let the fresh air in. Check out these helpful tips below to make the process a little easier on yourself:

### ❖ Ask your loved ones for help

Cleaning an entire home on your own can be overwhelming. Don't tackle the chores by yourself - instead, reach out to some of your friends and family members for assistance. Not only will this make the cleaning day more efficient, it's also the perfect opportunity to bond with your loved ones. An extra helping hand can also take care of the chores that are difficult for you to complete on your own, such as dusting in hard-to-reach places, or rearranging large, bulky pieces of furniture.

### ❖ Make a spring-cleaning checklist

Create a checklist of all of the tasks you'd like to complete. Spring cleaning generally consists of sanitizing and organizing rooms, but there a dozen other chores that are typically overlooked. Aside from mopping and vacuuming the floors, cleaning the windows, dusting and reorganizing, consider the following tips.

- Medicine Cabinet - Remove all medications and prescriptions that are expired, as well as ones that you no longer use.
- Make sure medications are labeled and stored in their proper containers.
- Be sure to store medications in a cool, dark, dry place and out of reach of children.
- Review items in your emergency kit and replace items like Band-Aids and other frequently used items.
- Have an emergency plan in place with easy access to emergency numbers programed into your phone.
- Refrigerator and Pantry - Eliminate all food items that are expired.
- Clean and unclutter the refrigerator and pantry, putting frequently used items in easy to reach locations.



- Smoke and carbon monoxide detectors - Replace the batteries and be sure they are in working order.
- Check Expiration dates on hand held fire extinguishers. Rooms and hallways – Replace all light bulbs that are no longer working and increase lighting to dark areas of the home.
- Eliminate area rugs that pose a tripping hazard.
- Move furniture and other obstructions to maintain a clear walkway throughout the house.
- Bathroom - Consider installing grab bars in the bathtub, shower and near the toilet.

#### ❖ **Eliminate the clutter**

It may be difficult to part with the items you've accumulated over the years, but hoarding the things that you rarely use takes up space, and has the potential to negatively impact your physical and mental health. Talk to your family members about helping you tackle the room with the most clutter first. Make three separate piles: yes, no and maybe. Place all of the items you use often in the “yes” pile and turn items that are just taking up space in your home to the “no” pile. For items you're unsure of parting with, place them in the “maybe” pile. For all of the things that you're willing to part with, determine the condition and either throw them in the trash, or donate them to charity.

#### ❖ **Reorganize before you cleanse**

Once you've eliminated the clutter in your home, you'll have a fresh slate for cleansing and organizing. For your first task, gather all of your important financial, health and legal documents and organizing them in one space. This will save you time, money and stress in the event of an emergency. After gathering these critical documents, continue organizing. Make the items you use regularly easily accessible, and place items you rarely use tucked out of your way. Once your living space is arranged, you can start taking care of the traditional spring-cleaning tasks: sanitizing, mopping, vacuuming, and dusting.



**Resources:**

<https://www.healthinaging.org/about-us>

<https://www.fda.gov/drugs/resources-you-drugs/medicines-and-you-guide-older-adults>

<https://www.sunriseseniorliving.com/blog/march-2017/5-spring-cleaning-tips-for-seniors.aspx>

[https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/publications/final\\_companion\\_piece.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/publications/final_companion_piece.pdf)

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