

Hints to Aid in Handling Medication

Taking a Drug

- Never take a drug in the dark.
- Re-check the label before each use. Could be taking the wrong.
- Tell the doctor about any unexpected new symptoms experienced while taking medicine. A change of medicine or a dose adjustment may be needed.

Storage

- Keep all medicine out of children's reach.
- Store drugs in a cool dry place such as a kitchen cabinet or bedroom.
- Avoid medicine cabinets in the bathroom. The medicine gets too moist and warm at times.
- Keep medicine in its original container and tightly closed until taken or until divided out in a pill divider.
- If using a pill divider, measure out medications by time of the day and day of the week for no more than one week at a time.
- Do not remove the label.
- Use a 'sharpie' or other large tip pen to clearly mark and label medications for people with limited vision.
- If the directions call for refrigeration do not freeze.

Discarding

- Do not save leftover medicine to use later.
- Periodically go through all medications and discard ones no longer taken or beyond expiration dates as is shown on the container.
- Dispose of medicine safely to protect children and pets.

Refills

- Plan ahead for refills. When you have filled a pill divider or you notice that you do not have enough medication for the next week, call the pharmacy for a refill.
- The doctor or dentist must approve all refills beyond those approved with the original or renewed prescription.
- If you go to a new pharmacy, you must have a prescription; or the new pharmacist must call the doctor or original pharmacy to see if a refill is authorized.
- If a refill is needed, call the pharmacist and order the refill by number and name.
- Plan ahead and allow several hours for a prescription to be filled.
- Use one pharmacy for the whole family if possible. The pharmacist then has a record of all your drugs and can communicate effectively with the doctor.

Adapted from *As People Grow Older*,
Jane Oderberg, LMSW and Susan Smith, LMSW, 1995.