

Medication Safety Checklist:

What Caregivers Should Watch For

Medication problems are one of the most common reasons older adults end up in the hospital.

Small issues — like missed doses, side effects, or medication interactions — can quickly lead to confusion, weakness, falls, or other complications.

Use this checklist to help reduce medication-related risks.

Keep an Updated Medication List

Maintain a current list of:

- ✓ Prescription medications
- ✓ Over-the-counter medications
- ✓ Vitamins and supplements
- ✓ Dosages and timing

Bring this list to every medical appointment, urgent care visit, or hospital visit.

Watch Closely After Medication Changes

New medications or dose adjustments are a common time for problems to develop.

Pay attention in the first few days after a change for symptoms like:

- Increased confusion
- Dizziness
- Unusual fatigue
- Weakness
- Nausea
- Falls

If new symptoms appear shortly after a medication change, contact a healthcare provider.

Make Sure All Providers Know the Full Medication List

Older adults often receive prescriptions from multiple providers.

This can lead to:

- Duplicate medications
- Drug interactions
- Conflicting instructions

Whenever possible, ensure each provider has the complete medication list.

Watch for Sedating Medications

Certain medications can increase the risk of falls, confusion, and memory problems.

Examples include medications used for:

- Sleep
- Anxiety
- Pain
- Muscle relaxation
- Some allergy medications

If you notice increased sleepiness or balance issues after starting a medication, discuss this with a provider.

Warning Signs That May Be Medication Related

Sometimes medication side effects appear as general decline rather than obvious reactions.

Watch for:

- Sudden confusion
- Increased falls or balance problems
- Loss of appetite
- New swelling
- Unusual fatigue
- Blood pressure changes

When an older adult suddenly seems “off,” medications are always worth reviewing.

Helpful Questions to Ask When a Medication Is Prescribed

- What is this medication for?
- What side effects should we watch for?
- Could it interact with other medications?
- How long should this medication be taken?
- When should we call if something changes?

Key Takeaway

Small medication issues can quickly lead to bigger problems in older adults.

Keeping an updated list and paying attention to changes can help caregivers identify concerns early and prevent complications.