

## TEN TIPS TO IMPROVE MEDICATION COMPLIANCE



**C** - Call your pharmacist or physician if you have any concerns about any of your medications

**O** - Order your medication renewals / refills well in advance -- don't wait until the weekend or until you have just swallowed your last tablet.

**M** - Make your medication regimen fit into your lifestyle, not the other way around. Associate taking your medication with something you regularly do every day, e.g. brushing your teeth, sitting down to meals.

**P** - Plan your medication times by using a daily planner, a pill organizer or an automated medications dispenser.

**L** - Learn to never leave home without an up-to-date medication list. After All, you wouldn't consider going back to the bank without your bank pass-book.

**I** - Inform your pharmacist or physician of any issues or concerns you may have regarding side effects, etc.

**A** - Ask, Ask, Ask! Before you crush or stop or change a medication.

**N** - Never, never stop a medication abruptly - always consult with your pharmacist or physician first.

**C** - Clarify with your pharmacist what over-the-counter (non-prescription) or herbal medications are safe to mix with your prescription medications.

**E** - Enquire from your physician on a regular basis about the ongoing need for each medication.

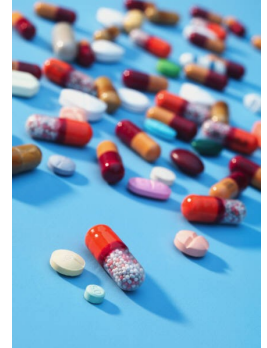


A good rule of thumb is to have all medications written down for emergencies. On the next page is a list I suggest people use when keeping track of their medications.



# Medication Non-Compliance

Medication non-compliance kills more senior citizens each year than accidents, influenza and pneumonia combined, and costs the society over \$175 billion annually. According to a recent study, drug non-compliance, (defined as forgetting to take medication, overuse of a medication or, altering current dosing schedules) is among the leading causes of deaths among senior citizens in America today. Some are calling non-compliance "America's other drug problem" and drawing attention to the fact that medication misuse is responsible for an estimated 218,000 deaths in 2000 (20,000 more deaths than that reported five years earlier), over 2 million unnecessary hospital and long-term care admissions and billions in physician and emergency department and additional treatment costs.



Various studies have quantified the extent of medication non-compliance among senior citizen population segments. Approximately one-third of all patients take their medicine, one-third take some of their medication and one-third do not take any at all. In addition in terms of age, Senior Citizens are by far the largest offenders of medication non-compliance.



There are many reasons offered up to explain why people over 65 are non-compliant with their medications. Fear of drugs, denial of the illness, misunderstanding the instructions, belief that they've been cured when symptoms fade, forgetfulness and cost of prescriptions are among the most commonly cited factors contributing to non-compliance.

The situation is further complicated due to the fact that no single organization bears majority of the costs associated with non-compliance so an effective strategy for improving medication compliance must be implemented by a multitude of healthcare disciplines. Hospitals, pharmacies, employers, pharmaceutical companies, managed care organizations and taxpayers all pay part of the costs. An effective strategy for improving compliance must require all of these participants to work together if the risk of falls is going to be substantially reduced for seniors taking 4 or more prescription drugs each day.

In addition to healthcare professionals, effectively increasing medication compliance must involve the person responsible for the senior's day-to-day care. The family caregiver must be educated as to the effects and risks associated with medication non-compliance and they must be a proactive part in the solution. In most scenarios it is the family caregiver that will take on the roll of organizing, compiling and managing the seniors daily medication regiment.

