

Generation Rx: Getting the Best Results from Your Medications

“Medications are probably the single most important health care technology to prevent illness, disability, and death in the geriatric population.”¹

This is a statement often quoted in regards to prescription use in older adults. Medications are a very useful way to help promote health and treat medical issues, but they can also have unwanted side effects. A recent study found approximately 4.5 million visits per year to the doctor or emergency department are due to adverse drug events.² Unfortunately, it has also been reported that fatal medication errors for patients being treated outside of a clinical setting (i.e. at home) increased over 500% between 1983 and 2004.³ The good news is that there are simple steps to take to avoid unwanted medication adverse effects. It is vitally important to educate older adults about these simple steps to be able to reduce the occurrence of medication-related problems.

This toolkit is a **resource** for information about safe use of medications in older adults. It provides **activities** to help educate older adults and their caregivers about the safe use of medications and suggestions for avoiding adverse drug events.

These activities and resources can be used in conjunction with a general presentation entitled, “Generation Rx: Getting the Best Results from Your Medications.” This presentation was designed for any age group, whereas the toolkit resources and activities were developed more specifically with older adults and caregivers in mind.

The resources and activities could be used to provide educational sessions at senior centers, libraries, independent living communities, or other locations where a group of older adults or caregivers may gather.



1. Avorn, J. Medication use and the elderly: Current status and opportunities. *Health Aff.* 1995;14:276-86.

2. Sarkar, U, Lopez A, Maselli JH, Gonzales R. Adverse events in U.S. adult ambulatory medical care. *Health Services Research* [Internet]. 2011 May [cited May 9]. Available from: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-6773.2011.01269.x>

3. Phillips D, Barker G, Eguchi M. A steep increase in domestic fatal medication errors with use of alcohol and/or street drugs. *Arch Intern Med* 2008; 168(14): 1561-1566.

Where do I start?

First, identify a worthwhile site and time for the activities. This will help guide which materials you may use. The general presentation, "Generation Rx: Getting the Best Results from Your Medications," would be a good way to start your educational efforts.

Who is my audience?

The materials and resources provided in the toolkit are primarily for an older adult population or caregivers of older adults. However, the general presentation is suitable for anyone who may be interested in learning about safe medication use.

Where should I present? How do I make the arrangements?

There are many sites which would be good to target for educational efforts about safe use of medications in older adults. Below is a suggested list of locations and possible contacts:

- Senior centers (activities director or center director)
- Libraries (activities director or librarian)
- Independent living communities (service coordinator or building coordinator)
- Faith-based groups (organization leaders)

In a short email or phone call to potential sites, introduce yourself and indicate your interest in providing an educational program about this problem. Be as flexible as possible with the timing of your event, and emphasize your willingness to adapt to their needs. Finally, be persistent, and don't be discouraged if you don't hear back immediately.

How long should my program be?

The general presentation was designed to take about 30 minutes including time for questions. The various activities to compliment or use instead of the presentation could take anywhere from 30-60 minutes each. The materials could also be used to plan 2 separate events starting with the general presentation and followed by another program to do one or more of the activities, depending on the group's interest.

I know where and when I'll present my program. Now, what will I do?

We suggest that you use a variety of educational techniques in your presentation, including both discussion-based and interactive approaches. In this toolkit, you can customize your own program from a menu of activities including:

- Presentation tools (formal lecture or discussion-centered activities)
- Activities (learning tools that require audience participation)
- Website resources (sites which provide information and materials for the participants own personal use)

When planning, choose activities with which you feel most comfortable. Below, you will find sample programs (organized by time length) that incorporate a variety of approaches. These are only suggestions, so use your own experience to tailor the program to meet the needs of your participants.

45 minute program:

30 minutes – "Getting the Best Results from Your Medications" presentation

10 minutes – Role play activities

5 minutes – Question/answer session

60 minute program:

30 minutes – "Getting the Best Results from Your Medications" presentation

25 minutes – Bingo style game called "DRUGS" discussing the non-prescription medication label

5 minutes – Question / answer session

60 minute program:

45 minutes – Spinning Wheel activity to discuss the important information to include on a medication record

10 minutes – Role play activities

5 minutes – Question/answer session