

# Fact Sheet



Division of Developmental Disabilities Health Care Services

## Medication Safety

### Health Information Fact Sheet #5

**Medication Safety** is a process by which members are assisted in managing their medications in a safe and effective manner; preventing mistakes and supporting independence.

*Fact Sheet guidelines have been provided as general information, not as a substitution for medical treatment from a physician.*

#### Some Facts about Medication Safety:

- Managing medications can be difficult and mistakes can happen.
- Taking the wrong dose or amount of a medication is the most common mistake.
- Taking the wrong amount accounts for 41% of deaths related to medications.
- Members who are elderly, frail, or have special needs are more likely to have a serious reaction to a medication mistake.

#### Risk Factors (Alerts):

Recognition of the following conditions will help alert you to potential risks:

- *Distracted Caregiver:* Doing other things or multiple tasks while assisting with medications.
- *Unattended Medication:* Poor storage, such as open carts and drawers.
- *Poor Hygiene:* Failing to follow and/or assist the member with good hand washing habits.
- *Disorganization:* Messy medication storage and/or medication records.
- *Unlabeled:* Medications placed in baggies or unmarked containers.
- *No Documentation:* No record that shows when a dose has already been taken by a member.

#### What to Watch For:

Give assistance as needed to ensure that the following “Six Rights” are completed:

- *Right Person*
  - Make sure the correct person is taking the right medication.
- *Right Time*
  - Check the bottle or prescription for the right time (AM, PM, Bedtime, etc.).
- *Right Medicine*
  - Check the bottle or package for the medication name.
- *Right Dose*
  - Ensure only the amount ordered on the prescription or package is taken.
- *Right Route*
  - Ensure the medication is taken as ordered (by mouth, by feeding tube, on the skin, etc.).
- *Right Documentation*
  - Initial or mark the medication sheet or record after the dose is taken.

*The Medication Safety Fact Sheet is #2 in a series of Health Information Fact Sheets compiled by DDD Health Care Services.*

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## What to Do:

### Steps For Assisting Individuals With Medications

- Encourage and assist hand washing
- Help gather the necessary items and prompt or assist as needed
- Confirm the following for each medication:
  - Right Person • Right Time
  - Right Dose • Right Route
- Support the member in maintaining privacy
- Check for known Medication Allergies
- Ensure all doses taken are documented per agency policy and procedures
- Provide assistance as necessary to clean, store, and/or dispose of equipment properly
- Help correct any medication storage issues by encouraging the proper disposal of any expired or unlabeled medications

## Emergency

Immediately call 9-1-1 when any of the following conditions occur:

- Difficulty breathing
- Bleeding
- Loss of consciousness
- Excessive pain
- Change in alertness or ability to pay attention

