

For parents

Three High Risk Medications

Narcotic pain medication, heart and blood pressure medication and sedatives are responsible for most of the ED visits for medication poisoning.

More injuries in small children are due to medication poisoning than motor vehicle accidents. Do not take medication in front of young children or call medicine “candy,” even if it tastes good. Make sure child-safety caps are tightly closed and pill dispensers are kept in a child-safe cabinet or on a high shelf. Tell houseguests about medication safety and ask them to put purses, bags and coats that contain medication out of children’s reach.

Examples of narcotic pain medication (“opioids”) *Codeine, Percocet®, Vicodin®, Tramadol*

Examples of cardiovascular agents *Toprol®, Norvasc®, Procardia®, Lisinopril, Cozaar®*

Examples of sedative-hypnotics *Valium®, Ativan®, Muscle relaxants, Sleep aids*

For seniors

Medications with higher risks

Some antihistamines, blood pressure medications and antidepressants can increase the risk of falls. Sedatives and sleep aids should be used with extreme caution and require careful monitoring by your doctor.

Aging affects how your body handles medication. Your liver and kidneys slow down, which means medications stay in your body longer. Changes in body weight affect the amount of medicine you need to take. If you are taking medications for sleeping, pain, anxiety or depression, it is unsafe to drink alcohol. Loss of coordination, memory problems or dizziness can be a sign of drug interactions.

Ask your pharmacist whether your new medication contains acetaminophen.

Do not take two medications that contain acetaminophen. As little as 4g (4000mg) per day can lead to liver failure. Check all over-the-counter medications too.

Double check the label every time you take medication.

Turn on the lights and put on your glasses. If you are using pill dispensers, consider taping a picture of each pill above its appropriate compartment.

“Medication-related problems are common, costly and easily preventable in older adults.”

—American Geriatric Society, 2012 Beers Criteria Update Expert Panel

