

Protecting Parents from Misuse of Meds



By age 45, more than 60 percent will be on at least one prescription medication. More than one-third will be on three or more prescription medications (CDC, 2015). All medications carry risk of unintended effects. Some medications like opioid pain relievers can be addictive. The risk of addiction increases when medications are taken in larger doses or more frequently than prescribed. Risk is also greater for long-term use of these medications.

➤ Stay connected to your parent

More frequent visits and phone calls will allow you to note changes in your parent's behavior and health symptoms that may be related to the prescription drugs they are taking. If you are concerned that there is a problem, you can check with your parent's friends and other family members to see if they have also noticed any signs.

➤ Check your parent's pill bottles

If you can check your parent's medications without upsetting them, look for:

1. Pain medications prescribed by different doctors
 - Parent may be 'doctor shopping'
2. Labels that indicate warnings and precautions
 - Note if your parent is adhering to these labels (e.g. not drinking alcohol)
3. Leftover medications from past health conditions
 - Educate your parent on the dangers of self-medicating with old medications
 - Provide information on safe disposal of old medications
 - Note you are only allowed to take controlled substances to an authorized disposal site (e.g. Take-Back event) if that prescription was for a family member or pet in your household (DEA, 2014)

➤ Observe your parent's pattern of taking their medications

Are they forgetting to take their medications? Are they increasing the dosage?

➤ Talk to your parent about their prescription medications

Approach this subject carefully as your parent may become offended and/or upset by the subject. If appropriate, include multiple family members in the discussion so that everyone is on the same page. If addiction is suspected, encourage your parent to talk to their doctor and/or a behavioral health counselor.

➤ Offer to go with your parent on their next doctor's visit

If possible, take all of the medications with you and your parent to show the doctor.

For more information on where to get help for prescription drug addiction:

<http://dmh.mo.gov/ada/help.html>



Missouri Department of Mental Health
Division of Behavioral Health

www.dmh.mo.gov

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