

CONVERSATION WITH YOUR PARISH NURSE

APRIL 18, 2010



Last week I shared information about children and medication. This week I want to talk about our older family members and medications. People age 65 and older take more prescription and over the counter medicines than any other age group, partly due to presence of more long-term, chronic illnesses such as diabetes, heart disease, arthritis, and elevated blood pressure.

Medicines are dosed differently and monitored closely in the older adult, because they may act differently due to normal aging processes in the body. For instance, as we get older, we lose water and lean tissue (mainly muscle) and we gain more fat tissue. This can make a difference in how long a drug stays in the body. Also, as we age, the kidneys and liver may not process drugs as quickly as in a younger person.

*It is important to make your doctor aware of **all** drugs that you take - vitamins, herbal and dietary supplements, laxatives, cold medicines and antacids as well as the prescriptions from all medical providers you visit. This is important to help prevent serious drug interactions.*

Make it a point to learn the name of all medication you take and read the information sheet provided to make certain you are not taking anything that would cause a drug interaction or serious side effect. For instance, aspirin should not be taken with warfarin (Coumadin) because it can increase the potential of serious bleeding. Herbal supplement such as ginkgo biloba should not be taken with several types of over-the-counter and prescription drugs because it may increase blood pressure and the risk of bleeding problems.

Here are some simple hints to help you get the best results from your meds:

- ◆ *DO keep a list of all medicines you take - OTC and RX, and include the name of the doctor who prescribed each medicine, the strength and number of times you take it. Keep a copy in your medicine cabinet and also in your purse or wallet.*
- ◆ *DO read and save any written material you get with the medication.*
- ◆ *DO check the label each time you take the med to make sure it is yours and not someone else in the household!*
- ◆ *DO take medication exactly as prescribed.*
- ◆ *DO not take medication that is past expiration date.*
- ◆ *DO call your doctor right away if you are not comfortable with the way the medication makes you feel.*

Next week we will talk about what to take with you to the doctor, and what information you should request from each care provider including your pharmacist.

YOUR BODY IS A GIFT FROM GOD

BE PRO-ACTIVE IN CARING FOR IT IN THE WAY HE ASKS YOU TO CARE!

May God provide you with strength and peace as you journey through the week ahead, and in all things, give glory to God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Cynthia Rutan, Parish Nurse at Peace