

HERKIMER COUNTY OFFICE FOR THE AGING

NUTRITION NEWS

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Happy Thanksgiving!



Did you know that most people over the age of 55 take at least one prescription medication daily? And many take more than one medication daily. Yet ironically, as we age, certain factors contribute to our ability to effectively manage our medications. And this can lead to complications.

Living alone, taking 3 or more medications including nonprescription drugs or vitamins, memory problems, getting prescriptions from more than one doctor, filling prescriptions at more than one pharmacy, or using both online and community pharmacies can all increase the odds of making a mistake when taking your medicine. Seeking help from family members, physicians, or a pharmacist may be helpful.

If you are managing your medication on your own, you may want to consider taking the following precautions to prevent an error:

- * Use a medication organizer: choose one that works for you. Some have daily slots while

others have slots for morning and evening as well.

- * Make a list: present a complete medication list including amounts and dosage to each doctor you see.
- * Ask questions: asking doctors or pharmacists about side effects, food interactions, and other drug interactions can be helpful in promoting your overall health.
- * Keep a medicine diary: detailing your side effects, especially to new medications, may help physicians recognize if the symptoms are a sign of the disease or are a true side effect of the medication.



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Monthly Exercise: Toe Lifts

This strength training exercise for seniors also improves balance. You'll need a chair or a counter.

Stand straight and put your



arms in front of you. Raise yourself up on your toes as high as you can go, then gently lower yourself. Don't lean too far forward on the chair or counter. Lift and lower yourself 20 times.

Not only can medications interact with other medications, food and medication can have interactions that are potentially dangerous. It is important to check with your physician or pharmacist for a list of which foods to avoid or limit and also the timing of eating in regards to your medication.

Drug interactions may make your medication less effective. In other circumstances, it may actually make your medication “too effective”; that is, consuming certain foods at the same time as your medication may speed up your body’s absorption of the medication, thereby making the results intensified.

Common oral medications used to treat diabetes are some of the most common medications prescribed today. Fortunately, the differing medications have different mechanisms to control your blood sugar. Therefore, if you have an unwanted side effect from a specific medication, you may be able to choose one that works differently and obtain better results. Metformin can cause bloating, gas, diarrhea, and a loss of appetite. Glyburide may cause unintentional low blood sugar. Actos can cause fluid retention, which may increase the incidence of congestive heart failure in at risk individuals.

Medications used to treat hypertension (or high blood pressure) are also very common. Some of these medications include Lisinopril, Lasix, captopril, Norvasc, and atenolol. Diuretics (such as Lasix) may cause a dangerously low potassium level, as potassium is excreted in the urine. Symptoms of low potassium include weakness, fatigue, and leg cramps. Physicians commonly prescribe potassium tablets in

conjunction with diuretics to counteract this. Occasionally, diuretics cause an increase in blood sugar levels, specifically in diabetic patients. Therefore, an adjustment in diabetic oral agents may also accompany a prescription of a diuretic. Other common side effects of blood pressure medications include insomnia, cold hands and feet, skin rash, dizziness, and dry mouth.

Lastly, cholesterol medications are a known class of medicine that interact with grapefruit and grapefruit juice. Other medications, such as certain antibiotics, blood pressure medications, and cardiac medications may also interact with citrus. Chemicals in the fruit can interfere with the enzymes that break down the medication in your digestive tract. As a result, the medication may stay in the body for too short or too long a time. If the medication is broken down too quickly, it may not have time to work. And if the medication stays in the body too long, it can increase to potentially dangerous levels (as you continue to take the medication day after day.) This may result in serious side effects.

Keeping an updated detailed list of your current medications in your wallet or purse or on your refrigerator can also help prevent medication mix-ups. It is also important to always read the information provided by the pharmacy, especially when beginning a new prescription medicine.



While many of us celebrate the holidays with family and friends, it can also be time of loneliness. People who suffer from depression often report heightened symptoms during the holidays. Depression in the elderly differs from depression in younger people. In the elderly, depression often occurs with other medical illnesses and tends to last longer.

Effective treatment of depression in the elderly often gets delayed as well. Changes in the person's circumstances (such as deaths of siblings, spouses, and friends) along with the expectation that the elderly are "supposed to be slowing down" can cause doctors to miss the signs and symptoms of true depression.

Eating alone can be particularly difficult. This could be a great time of year to try out one of our congregate dining sites. Socializing with old friends and the chance to make new ones are just a couple of the benefits. There is also the meal itself, which is designed to be nutritious and enjoyable.

Some research suggests that certain foods can help "boost" your mood. The following are some of the proposed foods:

- ◇ Foods rich in Vitamin B12 and folic acid. Folic acid is found in beans and greens, while Vitamin B12 may be found in fish, meats, poultry, and dairy products.
- ◇ Fruits and vegetables: they are packed with antioxidants and phytochemicals. Both of these may improve your overall health as well as your mental health.
- ◇ Selenium rich foods: this includes beans and legumes, lean meats, and nuts and seeds.
- ◇ Fish: fish that is high in omega-3 fatty acids, such as salmon, is thought to be particularly

helpful. Other sources of omega-3 fatty acids include sardines, herring, and tuna.

- ◇ Vitamin D: while you can get Vitamin D from the sun, upstate New York is not abundant in sunshine during the winter months! You may want to consider a supplement. Other sources include fortified foods, such as breakfast cereals, breads, juices, and milk.
- ◇ Chocolate!! Small amounts of chocolate, especially dark chocolate, stimulates the brain to release endorphins. These "feel good" chemicals can give your mood a lift.

This can also be the time of year when volunteering can give your spirits a boost. There are many opportunities, especially around the holidays, to become active in different organizations. Try a church function or a community activity such as a local toy drive. Reaching out to other people who share your loneliness can be a blessing to both of you. Offering assistance to others sometimes turns out to be the best help for ourselves as well!!

You can also try something new. There are book clubs, cooking clubs, walking clubs, scrapbooking clubs....or try to learn a new hobby.



As previously mentioned, cooking can be a fun new hobby. Here is a great seasonal recipe to get you started!

Cranberry Cheesecake Bars

Crust:

1 (18.25 ounce) package butter cake mix

1/2 cup butter, softened

1 egg

1/4 cup chopped pecans

Filling:

1 (8 ounce) package cream cheese, softened

1/4 cup confectioners' sugar

1 egg

1/2 tsp vanilla extract

1 (16 ounce) can whole berry cranberry sauce

1/4 tsp ground nutmeg

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. Beat cake mix, butter, and one egg together in a bowl using an electric mixer on low speed until mixture is crumbly; stir in pecans. Press mixture into a 9x 13 inch baking dish.

Bake in the preheated oven until crust is set, 5 to 8 minutes.

Beat cream cheese, confectioners' sugar, one egg, and vanilla extract together in a bowl using an electric mixer until smooth. Stir cranberry sauce and nutmeg together in a separate bowl. Carefully spread cream cheese mixture onto crust. Spoon cranberry sauce mixture in 3 rows lengthwise over cream cheese mixture. Pull a knife through cranberry sauce mixture into cream cheese mixture to form swirls.

Bake in preheated oven until cream cheese mixture is set, 30 to 40 minutes. Cool completely before cutting into bars.



HEAP

If you received HEAP last year but have not yet received an application for this year, please call our Office at 867-1195.

If you did not receive HEAP last year but want to apply this year, please call our Office at 867-1195.

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