Tips for healthy aging and medication use:

- Talk with your doctor or pharmacist about the risks of your medications.
- Ask about safer alternatives, especially for pain.
- Avoid taking more medication than prescribed.
- Avoid drinking alcohol when taking medications.

Resources

Medical emergencies: Dial 9-1-1

Vermont Area Agencies on Aging
Senior HelpLine: (800) 642-5119

Support and Services at Home (SASH)
(802) 863-2224

VNAs of Vermont
(855) 484-3862

National Eldercare Locator
(800) 677-1116
eldercare.acl.gov/Public/Index.aspx

Medication disposal
Dial 2-1-1 to find locations in your community
For more info, locations, and free mail-back envelopes: healthvermont.gov/DoYourPart

Prescription opioids: What you need to know
healthvermont.gov/RxAware

Department of Health
Division of Alcohol & Drug Abuse Programs
108 Cherry St. • Burlington, VT 05402
(800) 464-4343 • (802) 651-1550
healthvermont.gov

Department of Disabilities, Aging & Independent Living
HC2 So., 280 State Dr. • Waterbury, VT 05671
(802) 241-0294
dail.vermont.gov
How does aging affect use of medications?

**Aging makes your body more sensitive to medications.**

Aging makes it harder for your body to process medications and alcohol. This means that it takes less to create a risk of a medical emergency, such as an overdose or other harmful effects.

**Medications can have health risks that increase when medications are mixed together or mixed with alcohol.**

### Increased risk of a medical emergency from mixing medications

Medications for these conditions increase risk of a medical emergency when taken together without talking with your doctor first, and when taken in amounts more than prescribed:

- Diabetes
- High blood pressure
- Heart problems
- Osteoporosis
- Anxiety or depression
- Chronic pain

### Increased risk of a medical emergency from mixing medications with alcohol

Mixing alcohol with these medications can cause slowed breathing, unconsciousness and other serious health problems when taken together:

- Sleeping pills
- Pain medications
- Muscle relaxants
- Medication for anxiety or depression
- Heart medications
- Cold or allergy medicine, such as antihistamines
- Aspirin or acetaminophen

**Signs of a medical emergency:**

- Loss of consciousness or fainting
- Falling asleep unintentionally
- Slow or shallow breathing
- Choking
- Unexplained irritability or agitation
- Difficulty thinking or remembering

**Call 9-1-1 immediately** if you think you or someone else is experiencing a medical emergency.

**Talk to your doctor regularly about your medications. Ask:**

- How much should I take and when should I take it?
- Can my medications be taken at the same time?
- Can my medications be taken with alcohol?

**For more information, contact any of the resources on the back of this brochure.**