Safety Point: Mental Health and Medication Safety
Medications are a very common way to treat different kinds of mental health conditions.

- Mental health conditions can affect your brain and the way you think, feel, or act.
- One way to treat a mental health condition is with medication.
- The medications that a doctor may prescribe to treat your mental health condition are called psychotropic medications.
Your doctor may prescribe medications for you if you have a mental health condition such as:

- **A mood disorder**
  - Mood disorders can make you feel so sad that you do not want to do the things you like to do.

- **A psychotic disorder**
  - People with psychotic disorders sometimes hear or see things that are not really there.

- **An anxiety disorder**
  - Anxiety disorders can make you afraid or very nervous about many situations or things.
Your doctor will tell you which medications will help to treat your mental health condition.

- If you are concerned about changes in your thoughts, feelings, or behavior, you should tell someone you trust.

- You should also talk to your doctor about these changes.
  - Your doctor will be able to tell if you have a mental health condition and what kind of treatment is best for you.
Just like other medications, medications for mental health conditions can be dangerous if you do not take them correctly.

• For instance, you could become sick if you:
  – Take a medicine that does not belong to you
  – Take too much or too little of your medicine
  – Take two or more medicines at the same time that should not be mixed together
You can stay safe by learning about your medications.

• You may:
  – Take multiple medications for conditions related to your developmental disability
  – Rely on others for managing your medications
  – Not understand the labels on your medications

• These things can put you at greater risk for unsafe medication management practices, but by learning all you can about your medications, you can stay safe and healthy!
You can tell your doctor about the medications that you are already taking.

- You can ask your support provider to help you make a list of all of your medicines to bring with you to your appointment.
- Your doctor will know if a new medicine is safe to take with the medicines you are already using.
You can ask your doctor questions about your medication until you understand the correct way to use it.

- You can also ask your pharmacist or nurse questions about how to use your medications.
- If you think of more questions after you are at home, write them down.
  - You or your support provider can call your doctor or pharmacist to get all of the answers you need.
Some important questions to ask about your medication are:

- How many pills should I take each day?
- Should I take them with certain foods or drinks?
- Can I take these medicines at the same time I take my other medicines?
- What should I do if I forget to take my medicine?
- How will this medicine make me feel?
- What should I do if I start to feel worse or do not start to feel better?
Reading and keeping the original label on your medication is very important for your safety.

- This label has instructions about the correct way to take your medicine.
  - The label should also have your name on it.
  - Never take any medicine that has someone else’s name on the label.

- Before you leave the pharmacy, ask your pharmacist to review the label and the instructions with you and your support provider.
  - You can write down this advice so you can have it with you at home.
You can fill out an information card to keep with your medication.

- You can use this link to a medication information card to help you remember how to take your medication:
  - When to take it
  - What to take it with
  - What not to take it with
  - Side effects you may experience
  - Date of your next refill
  - Date of your next visit with your doctor

http://content.ddssafety.net/DisplayArticle.aspx?StoryID=110
Once you start taking your new medication, tell someone how it is making you feel.

- Your medication should help you feel better.
- If you do not feel any different, tell someone.
- If you feel worse, tell someone.
- You should always tell your doctor or your support provider how all of your medications make you feel!
You should keep taking your medication until your doctor tells you it is okay to stop.

• Once you start taking your medication, you may begin to feel better.
  – This does not mean that you should stop taking your medication.
• If you stop taking your medication, you may start to experience symptoms again.
• Your doctor will tell you when it is okay to stop taking your medication.
You, your support person, and your doctor can work as a team to keep you healthy and safe.

- When you know the facts about the medication that you take, you are taking control of your health and safety.
- Pay attention to your body’s reactions to your medications and tell someone how you’re feeling.
- Always ask lots of questions.
  - Your doctor wants to answer all of your questions.
You can learn more about medication management from these websites!

- [http://www.bemedwise.org/](http://www.bemedwise.org/)
- [http://www.safemedication.com](http://www.safemedication.com)
- [http://www.pharmacyandyou.org](http://www.pharmacyandyou.org)
- You can print this out! [http://www.npsf.org/download/PharmacySafety.pdf](http://www.npsf.org/download/PharmacySafety.pdf)
Check out these websites to learn more about mental health conditions and psychotropic medications.