

Script/Notes for PowerPoint Presentation

Medication Use Safety Training for Seniors (MUST for Seniors)

Instructions: You can use the following script to help you prepare your remarks to your organization or other groups / gatherings in your community.

Slide 1: Welcome to the **Medication Use Safety Training for Seniors** program... or, what we call the **MUST for Seniors** program.

This program was developed by the National Council on Patient Information and Education (NCPPIE), now the BeMedWise Program at NeedyMeds, with help from the Peter Lamy Center for Drug Therapy and Aging at the University Of Maryland School Of Pharmacy in Baltimore.

As you watch this **MUST for Seniors** PowerPoint presentation, think carefully about how you use medicines and how the people you care for are using medicines.

Then - think about steps you can take to make sure that whenever you take medicines, you are taking them correctly and safely. For instance, if you are caring for an older parent or grandparent, watch for ways to help them organize and manage taking multiple medicine regimens as well as medicine use throughout the day.

Visit the [Toolkits for older adults](#) and [caregivers](#) for free downloads for seniors and caregivers.

The BeMedWise Program at NeedyMeds

BeMedWise Mission: Promoting the safe use, storage and disposal of medicines for better health.

How we achieve our mission: BeMedWise, a program of the national nonprofit NeedyMeds, achieves its mission by providing vetted information on medication safety with a network of national and international partners.

Vision statement: Improved health outcomes through the adoption of responsible medication practices.

Slide 2: Here's a question to consider: How many people have ever taken a medicine? Well, almost everyone has some experience with taking medicine, whether it was a prescription medicine or an over-the-counter product that you can buy without a prescription.

Here's another question: How many people have themselves had a problem with a medicine they have taken, or know someone who has?

Researchers estimate that thirty-seven percent of us have experienced at least one medicine-related problem. That's more than one in every three people. Are you that person? Today we as patients and caregivers will be learning ways to identify problems related to using medicine. We'll also learn about the tools and techniques we have to make medicine use safer.

Slide 3: So just what is a medicine? We know that medicines can change the lives of people with illness or diseases.

It's important to remember that medicines may or may not come from doctors or drug stores. Medicines can come from plants growing in fields, or they can be manufactured in labs.

It's also important to note that medicines are just one aspect of treating a disease or symptom.

A good attitude and a belief in treatments, including medicines, help to improve a patient's general well being. When used correctly, medicines can lead to a better quality of life, a healthier life and a longer life.

Slide 4: Here are the main types of medicines.

Prescription medicines such as blood pressure medicine or antibiotics, and **non-prescription or over-the-counter (OTC)**, medicines such as aspirin or cough medicine.

Remember, no matter what type of medicine you are taking, you must read and follow the directions.

Slide 5: There are similarities as well as distinct differences between prescription and over-the-counter medicines.

Prescription medicines are ordered, or prescribed, by a licensed health care professional and are purchased at a pharmacy. These days there are other ways to buy prescription medicines. You can get them at the drugstore or pharmacy in a retail store; through the mail by mail order; and online by placing an order over the Internet. Buying medicines over the Internet can be risky, even dangerous. You might receive drugs that are contaminated, contain the wrong ingredients, or contain no medicine at all. Visit [FDA's webpage](#) for the latest information on buying medicines safely online.

Over-the-counter (OTC) medicines are those you find in drug stores, supermarkets and discount stores. They are called "over-the-counter" because you do not need a prescription to buy them. It can be very convenient to just go and buy whatever medicine you need when you need it. But this means you are in charge of picking the right medicine, taking the right doses at the right time, watching for side effects, and reporting them if they happen. You also have to be careful about drug interactions with any other medicines you are taking, and make sure that the OTC medicine does not worsen any other health problem you may have.

Therefore it is very important that all the medicines you are taking be reviewed regularly by your healthcare team, including your physician, pharmacists and anyone else who may have prescribed a medicine for you – including physician assistants and nurse practitioners.

Slide 6: Dietary supplements and herbal remedies do not have to follow the same rules that prescription medicines have to follow by law. Manufacturers, not the FDA, are responsible for determining that the dietary supplements they make or distribute are safe. The manufacturers are also responsible for proving that any representations or claims they make about these supplements are not false or misleading. This means that the dietary supplements do not need approval from the FDA before you can buy them, and take them.

At present, the manufacturer is responsible for establishing its own manufacturing practice guidelines to ensure that the dietary supplements it produces are safe and contain the ingredients listed on the label. By law, the manufacturer is responsible for ensuring that its dietary supplements are safe before they are marketed. Unlike drug products that must be proven safe and effective for their intended use before marketing, there are no provisions in the law for the FDA to approve dietary supplements for safety or effectiveness before they reach the consumer.

Slide 7: When a medicine's benefits outweigh its known risks, the FDA considers it safe enough to approve. But before you use any medicine, you should think through the benefits and risks so that you can make the best choice for you. There are several types of risks from medicine you might use. **First**, there is the possibility of a harmful interaction between the medicine and a food, beverage, dietary supplement including vitamins and herbals, or another medicine. If you combine any of these products, you increase the chance that there could be interactions.

Second, there is the chance that the medicine may not work as expected. And third, there is the possibility that the medicine may cause additional problems.

When you are trying to weigh the benefits and risks of taking a medicine, you may face a difficult choice. The best choice always depends on your particular situation. And in many situations, the expert advice of your healthcare professional can help you make the decision that is best for you.

Slide 8: Here's a question to consider: *What types of problems have you heard of that were caused by medicines?* Maybe an allergic reaction or a side effect such as a headache or upset stomach? Here are some specific ways to lower the risks and obtain the full benefits of medicines: First, talk with your doctor, pharmacist or other healthcare professionals. Know your medicines, both prescription and over the counter. Read the labels and follow directions. Avoid interactions. Monitor your medicines' effects, and the effects of other products that you use.

Slide 9: Let's look at some examples of medicine use problems. Minor ones include a stomach ache from an antibiotic, or being a little dizzy when you stand up because you forgot to take your blood pressure medicine yesterday and took two tablets today. More serious side effects can include a bleeding stomach ulcer caused by too much aspirin, or fainting due to low blood sugar because you took your diabetes medicine and didn't eat.

Slide 10: Over use of medicines can happen by accident. Perhaps you can't remember if you took a medicine in the morning, so you take it again in the afternoon. Overuse can also happen on purpose. For instance, if you take an extra pain pill because you are going out for a walk.

Under use can be as big a problem as overuse, and can also happen by mistake or on purpose. You may forget to take your evening dose of an antibiotic because you fall asleep, or you may deliberately decide not to take our diuretic because you are going shopping and don't want to have to run to the bathroom during your trip. Taking less medicine than prescribed, or none at

all, happens a lot. Sometimes people forget, sometimes they are confused by the directions, or may simply decide that they don't need it anymore. Taking medicines that are not prescribed for you can also cause problems.

Slide 11: Drug interactions occur when a medicine you are taking reacts with another medicine you have taken, food you have eaten, or liquids you have ingested- particularly alcohol. Drug interactions can cause increased or decreased amounts of medicine in your body, and lead to side effects or a less effective therapy.

Slide 12: Here's something else to think about. *When can medicine use problems happen?* The answer -- lots of times. As we see on this slide, some things make it more likely that a medicine use problem might occur. For example, suppose you are not taking three medicines, and your doctor prescribes another medicine which has to be taken three times each day. Suddenly, your medicine taking schedule has to be adjusted to include those medicines you're already taking, plus the new prescription that was just added to your regimen. This is just one example. On the slide, you'll see several reasons why medicine use problems happen.

Slide 13: There are ways you can help avoid medicine use problems. One of the most important things to do is learn about your medicines and health conditions. You can do this by talking to your health care providers and reading all the information that comes with your medicines. You can also use the **Drug Facts Label** found on the packaging or containers of OTC medicines. And keep an updated medicine list to share with your healthcare providers at each visit. Ask your pharmacist about your medicines until you thoroughly understand your medicine instructions. When in doubt, always ask.

Don't forget to ask about scheduling a medicine review, at least once a year. You know that good health can come from a check-up, so make sure your medicine have a check-up too.

Slide 14: Take a close look at the questions on this slide. Do you know that this information about each medicine you take? These are questions you should be able to answer about any type of medicine or herbal product you use. If you don't know the answer, check with your doctor, other prescriber, nurse or pharmacist. The best way to ensure safe medicine use is to be knowledgeable about everything you take.

Slide 15: Your up-to-date medicine list is one of the most important things you can have to protect your health and avoid a medicine use problem. Keeping a current medicine list can help improve medicine safety by first, helping to avoid duplication of similar medicines. Second, it can help your healthcare team members spot and stop possible drug interactions and drug duplications. And third, letting all the members of your healthcare team know about all of your medicines will help them make more informed decisions about your treatment. Because they do not always talk with each other, it's important that you communicate with everyone.

When making your medicine list, be sure to add any new medicines that you start, and to cross out any medicines you no longer take.

Slide 16: Remember, your medicine list is not just for you. Suppose you took the time to completely fill out your current medicine list and then put it in the refrigerator right next to your grandchildren's picture for safe keeping. This week, you have an appointment with Dr. X to see about your shoulder pain of nearly two months. Later in the week, you have an appointment with Dr. Y to have your blood pressure checked. If Dr. X prescribes or recommends a new medicine for your shoulder pain, you might forget to tell Dr. Y about this new medicine that you now are taking. That's why it's important to keep your medicine list current and to show it to every healthcare provider at every visit.

Slide 17: Do not be afraid to ask your healthcare provider questions or to review any information or recommendations that you are not clear on. You are the best judge of your body, and are in the driver's seat for your health. BeMedWise has available a free downloadable form to help make it easy to get ready for a visit to the doctor, ["Make Notes and Take Notes, Before, During, and After My Doctor's Visit."](#)

It often helps to have another set of ears with you when you visit the doctor. This means that someone goes with you to the doctor's visit. It might be an adult son, daughter, niece or nephew. She or he should go in with you when you talk with the doctor, not just wait in the waiting room until the visit is over. During the visit, she or he can take notes and ask for clarification if you're not sure what has been said.

Slide 18: The **Drug Facts Label**, shown here on the right, is an important source of information on over-the-counter medicines. It will help guide you to the important information you need to know before taking this medicine. Since 2002, every OTC medicine has had a **Drug Fact Label** on its outer packaging or on the product container itself. If the **Drug Facts Label** is on the outer packaging of the OTCs you buy, be sure to keep the packaging so you can read the **Drug Facts Label** before you take the medicine. On the next slide, you'll see what's included on the **Drug Facts Label** and in what order the information is presented.

Slide 19: Here are the different sections of the **Drug Facts Label**. The **Active Ingredients section** tells you about the part of your medicine that makes it work, its name, what it does, and how much in each pill or teaspoon. The **Uses** section tells you about the problems the medicine will treat. The **Warnings section** tells you when you should talk to your doctor first. How the medicine might make you feel, when you should stop using the medicine, when you shouldn't use the medicine at all, the things you shouldn't do while taking the medicine, to check with a doctor before using medicines if pregnant or breastfeeding, to keep medicines away from children. The **Directions** tell you how to safely use the medicine, how much to use, how to use it, and how often to use it. In other words, how many times a day you should take it and how many hours apart. The **Other Information section** tells you how to keep your medicine when you are not using it.

Slide 20: One way to remember to read the information that comes with your prescription medicine is the short phrase - ***Read It and Heed It!***

It's often difficult to remember what your doctor or pharmacist told you about your medicines. That's why it is important to read carefully the written information that come with your prescription medicines when you purchase them from a pharmacy.

If you have difficulty reading the written information, ask a family member or friend to read it to you. Be sure to keep it handy while you are taking the medicine and to refer to it whenever you may have a question about your medicine.

Slide 21: Today we reviewed several different topics about medicines and ways to better help ensure safe use of medicines. Making yourself knowledgeable about your medicines is one of the best things you can do for your health along with speaking up and asking questions whenever you're not sure about any of your medicine instructions. This is true for both patients and caregivers. Remember, you are the most important part of your healthcare team.

Slide 22: This slide lists a number of helpful web addresses for additional information. Be sure to visit each one as needed.

Slide 23: For additional information on safe medicine use, visit the [BeMedWise](#) or the [Peter Lamy Center for Drug Therapy and Aging](#) websites. Thank you.

End.

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