

Health Hints

How To Take Medicine So It Does The Most Good

(NAPSA)—Here are some statistics you may find hard to swallow: The average American age 60-75 takes three prescription drugs at one time within a month, according to a survey conducted by Opinion Research, and older Americans use a third of all over-the-counter medicines purchased. Therefore, it's vital that boomers and seniors use such medication appropriately.

Here are hints that may help:

- **Read the Label**—Before taking any medication, read the label and follow the instructions. The label has information about when and how to take the medicine and how much to take. It also provides warnings about what other medicines, foods or situations you should avoid (such as driving) when taking the medicine.

Because some active ingredients may interact with others, those taking multiple medicines should check with their doctor before taking any new medicine. Provide your doctor and your pharmacist with lists of all the medicines you take, including prescription and over-the-counter medicines, as well as any vitamins and herbal supplements you take regularly. Make sure all your doctors know what the others may be prescribing and ask one healthcare practitioner to manage your medications.

- **Swallowing Pills**—Swallowing can become more difficult with age. Swallowing pills, especially larger-size caplets or tablets, can also take some getting used to. Following these steps, however, may make swallowing pills easier.

1. Take several deep breaths and relax your neck and throat muscles. Breathe in and breathe out deeply until you feel calm.



If you have trouble getting pills down, try this: Take a few deep breaths, stand or sit up straight and swallow the pill with a full glass of cool water.

2. Stand or sit up straight.

3. Fill a glass with cool water, and place the pill or tablet on the back of your tongue.

4. Take a small drink of water and tilt your head back slightly. Swallow the water and the pill or tablet should go down easily with the liquid. Then drink the entire glass of water.

Contact your doctor if you have difficulty.

Unless instructed to do so by a healthcare practitioner, never chew, crush or break any capsules or tablets that are intended to be swallowed whole, according to Janet P. Engle, Pharm. D., former president of the American Pharmacists Association. "Some long-acting medications are absorbed too quickly when chewed, which could be unsafe," said Engle. "Other medications either won't be effective or could make you sick."

Anytime you have questions about how to take medicine properly, contact your doctor or pharmacist.