CARE Compass

Helping Navigate the Later Stages of Dementia



Partnering with your Pharmacist

Sanders-Brown
Center on Aging

This project was made possible by a generous gift.

The goal of the program is to help provide tools and information so that you can navigate the later stages of dementia. We hope that you find these videos and resources to be helpful and encouraging.

This program is designed to be a guide only for the compassionate care and support of your loved one and is not medical advice. If you have questions or concerns, always check with your doctor.

We also want to acknowledge that late-stage dementia can look very different from person to person. Sometimes the ideas we share may not work or work for a short time. That is okay. No one person is alike, and what works today may not work tomorrow. We hope to provide tools that can be options for you to try.

This guide contains links and other resources that may not be provided by the presenter but are added to the guide to provide additional information and support.

Partnering with your Pharmacist

Managing medications for someone with Alzheimer's disease can become more challenging as the disease progresses and care needs change. Your pharmacist can be an important member of your loved one's care team.

The Pharmacy Can Help:

Compliance packaging- these are typically blister packs that only allow the specific pills to open each time your loved one takes them. This can help organize multiple pills, the dosage, and the time they are taken.

Medication packet with pills that can be pushed through packaging. Showing two days' worth of medication



Customized Medication Planners- Plastic pill planners which each day and time can be customized.

Monthly pill organizer with individual days in its own container



The pharmacist can package daily prescribed medications, "as needed" or PRN medication, and supplemental pills not prescribed by a medical provider. There are monthly, weekly, and daily packaging sizes.

- Rember to share with your medial team any supplements, minerals, or vitamins your loved one is taking. Some supplements interact with prescription medication

PRN- As Needed

Talk to you pharmacist about how to handle PRN or “As Needed” medication

Label each medication bottle with its use. For example, Dramamine (used for nausea) has a label written that says, “Nausea.”

Put the PRN medication in a weekly pill organizer separate from the daily medication pill organizer.

For example: You have a medication to take as needed for pain. You may take it up to three times a day. You would get a 7-day medication planner. Label it so you know it is only your pain medication and put 3 pills in each day. At the end of the week, you can look and see how much pain medication you used.

You can also use a medication tracking sheet. This is helpful if multiple caregivers assist with medication administration.

For PRN medication each caregiver should know:
What the medication is for, how much to give in each dose, how far apart the doses can be given, and what the daily maximum dose is.

Keep an Updated Medication List

Your pharmacist can also help you with a printout of medications, BUT it is important to remember that there are different types of printouts and different reports that pharmacies can do, and they are not always the same.

You should ask the pharmacist for a printout of your loved one’s current medication list. Remember if they have medications you are picking up or having mailed from other pharmacies, those will not be on that list. Each pharmacy your loved one currently gets medications filled will have their own list. It’s important that you collect each list from each pharmacy for review.

You can talk to your pharmacist and work with them to get a list that is helpful for you. Remember that you may need to show power of attorney paperwork, and you may need an appointment to talk with your pharmacist.

The pharmacist is an incredible resource. You are not expected to know everything about medications. Your pharmacist is a valuable resource and important part of the Care Team!

It's never too late to ask questions, request a medication review, or find a better system for managing medications.

Check with your local pharmacy to see if they provide any of these services:

- Personalized approach to medication management
- On call services for questions
- Medication packaging
- Delivery
- Customization of options for each person's situation

It's important to check with the pharmacy in-person or over the phone. Some services offered might not be listed on the website.

Questions to Ask:

1. Does my loved one still need all their medications?

2. Could any of these medications cause a problem when taken together?

3. What is the best way to keep track of my loved one's medications?

4. When should I give medications that are only "take when needed."

5. What should I do if my loved one gets discharged from the hospital and their medication changes?

Helpful Resources:

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration Web and the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality offer more information and ways to put a medication list together

https://www.ahrq.gov/health-literacy/improve/pharmacy/medicine-list.html#Template

https://www.fda.gov/consumers/consumer-updates/create-and-keep-medication-list-your-health

Medline Plus- Caregiving Medication Management

https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000952.htm