

How to Give Medications



Introduction

Do you have questions about medications? Your hospice nurse and pharmacy are great resources for learning more about the medications themselves and how to safely use them. Here are a few tips:

- Call your hospice nurse right away if you have any doubts about how to use a medication. Remember that there is a nurse available to answer your questions 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- Keep all medications out of the reach of adults who are unable to take them safely, children, and pets.
- **Remember the 5 R's**
 - Right person – Medications should only be taken by the person for whom they are prescribed. People living together in the same household may want to keep their medications in separate places to avoid mix-ups.
 - Right medication – Double check that the medication that you are taking is the one you think you are taking.
 - Right route – By mouth? Rectally? Under the tongue (sublingually)? Injection? Make sure you know how a medication is intended to be used.
 - Right dose – Sometimes dosing measurements can be confusing and instructions hard to read. Always double-check. Also, talk with your nurse before crushing a pill or opening up a capsule because doing so may affect the dosing, effectiveness and safety of the medication and cause unintended side-effects.
 - Right time – Timing is important. Take medications at the time prescribed and following any specific directions such as “with food.”
- Tell your hospice nurse right away if you are considering stopping, starting, or changing a medication. Your nurse can help you to do so safely.
- Try a medication chart or medication box to help keep track of what medications you should be taking and when.

