

**Do you think of the poison center as just a resource for parents of little kids?** We are a resource for older adults too!

Even as adults, we can easily make mistakes. The Washington Poison Center wants to provide you with tips that will help prevent those mistakes from happening, but in case they do, we are here to help, 24/7/365, by calling: 1 (800) 222-1222.

When you call the Washington Poison Center, you receive *free* and *confidential* health treatment advice from nurses and pharmacists with special training in poison information. We can answer a wide variety of questions and advise you on many types of exposures, so program our phone number in your cellphone and keep it near your home phone: 1 (800) 222-1222.

For more poison prevention tips specifically for older adults, check out the resources at the [bottom](#) of this page!

### Medication Errors

Older adults call the Poison Center about unintentional medication errors, accidents with non-pharmaceutical substances, adverse reactions, and more. Medication errors are most common, including:

- **Taking medication twice**
- **Taking the wrong medication**
- **Taking the incorrect dose**
- **Using the incorrect dosing route**
- **Taking someone else's medication**
- **Taking medication too close together**

*Mistakes happen, but do not feel ashamed. The Poison Center can help! Follow these steps below to prevent mistakes!*

1. *Establish a Routine, and Stick to it!* The best way to prevent mistakes is to create a medication management routine. Whether you use a weekly pill organizer or medications directly from their bottles, establish a way of knowing you have taken your doses. Keep a [Medication Calendar](#) like this on the refrigerator, or near where you take your medications, and check

off your medications as you take them. Make sure to always turn on the lights and put on your glasses.

2. *Know What You're Taking.* If you store each day's medicines together in a pill organizer, it is important that you are still able to identify each pill and understand why you are taking it. No matter how you organize them, keep an updated list. Have this list available in your home and take it with you to all medical appointments and anytime you travel. Need help developing a medication list? Here is a [development guide](#), [sample medication list worksheets](#), and a [Health and Medication Record](#) that can fit in your wallet.
3. *Call Before You Poison Yourself.* Did you forget if you took your morning medication already? Not sure if it is safe to take another? The medical specialists at the Poison Center can help you review your medications and determine the safest course of action. Never assume you can take two of a medication. It is always safer to ask an expert first because there are many different formulations and strengths.

*You can also call if you are considering taking a **new** over-the-counter medicine.* Our specialist can tell you if the medicine will have harmful interactions with the medications you are already taking.

4. *Add Your Own Labeling.* Some items from your medicine cabinet look alike. For example, eardrops and eye drops. Both come in bottles the same size and shape that often have very small print. Using your eye drops in your ears isn't harmful, but using your ear drops in your eyes can be very damaging. Adding your own labeling may help distinguish the product: add a sticker with "eye" or "ear" in larger print; use a Sharpie to make the caps different colors.

### Are you a Grandparent?

Children are the most common victims of poisonings. In order to keep them safe, here are a few tips:

Keep your medicine out of reach or in child-resistant containers. This is important when kids come visit you and when you visit them.

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when you visit them.

Purchase a lock box at your nearest store to lock up all of your medications.

Children like to mimic adult behaviors, including taking medicine. If possible, take your medicine somewhere where children will not see you.

Store household products (cleaners, detergents, etc.) separate from food items and out of reach of children.

Consider putting Mr. Yuk stickers on dangerous products. You can get Mr. Yuk stickers by calling the Washington Poison Center and asking for a Yuk Pack.

Leave household products in their original containers with their original labels. If you choose to put things in new containers, make sure they are properly labeled.

Dispose of your unused medications at your nearest take back location. You can find your nearest drop box site at a [Take Back Your Meds](#) site near you.

[Are you helping care for an older adult or work for an organization that works with older adults?](#)

We have information for you too. Check out these resources: a presentation designed specifically to help seniors that you can present and a brochure with some quick tips for caregivers. Washington Poison Center public health educators are also available to present this information to community groups, senior centers, retirement living communities, and service providers. Please [email](#) our Public Health Education team to schedule a presentation.

#### Resources

[Medication Management Self-Assessment](#) – To identify current medication management practices and potential areas for improvement. Once you have completed the assessment, utilize our guide on [Strategies to Improve Medication Management](#).

[Medication Calendar](#) — Unintentionally taking medication twice is one of the number one reasons older adults call us for advice. Establishing a routine and using a calendar to check-off when a dose was taken can help prevent medication incidents.

[Medication List Development Guide](#) and [sample medication list worksheets](#) — To document your current prescription medications, over-the-counter medications, vitamins, supplements, and any other substance that you take. Bring your list to every healthcare provider appointment.

[10 Medication Questions to Ask Your Provider or Pharmacist](#) — questions to guide discussion with your provider or pharmacist when you start a new medication

[Medication Management Presentation](#) — A pre-made PowerPoint presentation for older adults. Great for caregivers working with support groups, senior living facilities, or at senior centers, it provides information on the most common poisonings in older adults and how to prevent them.

[Caregiver packet](#) — A full set of compiled resources for professional and unpaid caregivers of older adults, including an assessment guide for caregivers and tools to work with an older adult on improving medication management practices

[Take Back Your Meds](#) — To find the nearest location to dispose of your leftover, expired, and unused medication

[The Washington Poison Center \(WAPC\)](#) provides immediate, free, and expert treatment advice and assistance on the telephone in case of exposure to poisonous, hazardous, or toxic substances. All calls are confidential.

**OUR MISSION:** To prevent and reduce harm from poisoning through expertise, collaboration, and education.

#### Contact Information

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Suite #100  
Seattle, WA 98125

Administrative Office: (206) 517-2350

**EMERGENCY:** (800) 222-1222

TTY users dial 711 for the Washington Relay Service

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