



## Tips for healthy aging and medication use:

- Talk with your doctor or pharmacist about the risks of your medications.
- Ask about safer alternatives, especially for pain.
- Avoid taking more medication than prescribed.
- Avoid drinking alcohol when taking medications.



## Resources

**Medical emergencies:** Dial 9-1-1

**Vermont Area Agencies on Aging**  
Senior HelpLine: (800) 642-5119

**Support and Services at Home (SASH)**  
(802) 863-2224

**VNAs of Vermont**  
(855) 484-3862

**National Eldercare Locator**  
(800) 677-1116  
[eldercare.acl.gov/Public/Index.aspx](http://eldercare.acl.gov/Public/Index.aspx)

**Medication disposal**  
Dial 2-1-1 to find locations in your community  
For more info, locations, and free mail-back envelopes: [healthvermont.gov/DoYourPart](http://healthvermont.gov/DoYourPart)

**Prescription opioids: What you need to know**  
[healthvermont.gov/RxAware](http://healthvermont.gov/RxAware)

## Aging & Medication: What you should know



Department of Health  
Division of Alcohol & Drug Abuse Programs  
108 Cherry St. • Burlington, VT 05402  
(800) 464-4343 • (802) 651-1550  
[healthvermont.gov](http://healthvermont.gov)

Department of Disabilities,  
Aging & Independent Living  
HC2 So., 280 State Dr. • Waterbury, VT 05671  
(802) 241-0294  
[dail.vermont.gov](http://dail.vermont.gov)



# How does aging affect use of medications?

## Aging makes your body more sensitive to medications.

Aging makes it harder for your body to process medications and alcohol. This means that it takes less to create a risk of a medical emergency, such as an overdose or other harmful effects.

## Medications can have health risks that increase when medications are mixed together or mixed with alcohol.

### Increased risk of a medical emergency from mixing medications

Medications for these conditions increase risk of a medical emergency when taken together without talking with your doctor first, and when taken in amounts more than prescribed:

- Diabetes
- Heart problems
- Anxiety or depression
- High blood pressure
- Osteoporosis
- Chronic pain

### Increased risk of a medical emergency from mixing medications with alcohol

Mixing alcohol with these medications can cause slowed breathing, unconsciousness and other serious health problems when taken together:

- Sleeping pills
- Medication for anxiety or depression
- Cold or allergy medicine, such as antihistamines
- Pain medications
- Heart medications
- Aspirin or acetaminophen
- Muscle relaxants

## Talk to your doctor regularly about your medications. Ask:

- How much should I take and when should I take it?
- Can my medications be taken at the same time?
- Can my medications be taken with alcohol?



**For more information, contact any of the resources on the back of this brochure.**



## Signs of a medical emergency:

- Loss of consciousness or fainting
- Falling asleep unintentionally
- Slow or shallow breathing
- Choking
- Unexplained irritability or agitation
- Difficulty thinking or remembering

**Call 9-1-1 immediately** if you think you or someone else is experiencing a medical emergency.

