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.
- Do not stop taking your medications without talking with your doctor.
- Avoid drinking alcohol when taking medications.
- Avoid driving until you know how the medicine will affect you.

Resources

VT Helplink
802-565-LINK
vthelplink.org

Medical emergencies: Dial 9-1-1

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

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

VNAs of Vermont
(855) 484-3862

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

Prescription opioids: What you need to know
healthvermont.gov/RxAware
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
- High blood pressure
- Heart problems
- Osteoporosis
- Anxiety or depression
- Chronic pain

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

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

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

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.

Talk to your doctor 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.