

# Take time for those in nursing homes

Few people would purposefully neglect their loved ones. But sometimes it can be easy to forget even the best of intentions. Take some time out from your schedule and spend it with nursing home residents. It's easy to do, and it will mean a lot—to them, and maybe to you as well.

## Visiting friends and family

Here are some tips to ensure a good visit.

- **Call first.** Calling ahead gives your loved one time to prepare.
- **Show you care.** Be free with smiles, hugs and laughter.
- **Listen to their stories.** Recalling memories is a favorite pastime of nursing home residents.
- **Consider an outing.** If your loved one is able, consider a trip to a restaurant, a family gathering, the park or another favorite place. Work with nursing home staff to be sure proper care is taken.

- **Ask them to sign birthday cards if they can.** This can make them feel like they are still part of the family. It will also mean a lot to friends and relatives.
- **Bring children.** Nothing brightens the room like a child!

## If you can't visit

If you can't come in person, make sure to let your loved one know you still care.

- **Call often.** Ask how they're doing and update them on family and friends.
- **Send cards, gifts or photos.** Most nursing home residents treasure these small mementoes.

## Watch for quality of care

- **When visiting or calling, ask your loved one how they're doing and whether they're being well cared for.**
- **Keep your eyes open.** Do most residents appear to be fairly alert, clean and cared for? Is the nursing

home clean? Are staff members pleasant and professional?

- **Talk to nursing home staff.** Ask how your loved one is doing and what his or her daily routine is. Ask about any concerns.
- **Use resources to check on quality of care.** At [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov), scroll down to "Search Tools" and click on "Compare Nursing Homes in Your Area." With this tool, you can compare how nursing homes in your area measure up on specific aspects of care called "quality measures."

## Reaching out to others

The sad truth is, many nursing home residents have no one who cares enough to visit. Many nursing home residents have a lot of wisdom, enjoyment and love to offer, but no one to offer it to. Remember, you may be in the same position someday, so help give them the caring and respect they deserve. You can make a difference. ▲

## DID YOU KNOW...?

# New resource could help save your life

No one wants to have a medical emergency. But if you do, it's good to be prepared. Some Arkansans over age 60 can now receive a free resource called a "File of Life."

The File of Life is an information packet that lists all of your medical information. It can help medics or other emergency workers figure out exactly how to help you in an emergency. Plus:

- Police officers can get help to you much faster.

- Emergency workers and hospital staff can begin treating you sooner.
- You will have peace of mind.

You can receive a File of Life for free if you are 60 years or older. You also must meet one of the following conditions:

- You must be diagnosed with a medical condition that puts your life at risk, OR
- You must be diagnosed with thinking or memory problems, such as Alzheimer's disease.

When you get your File of Life, put it in its special magnetic holder and put it on your refrigerator. You will also receive a sticker that you can place on your front door. That way, emergency workers will know that you have a File of Life and where to find it.

To receive your File of Life, call Alzheimer's Arkansas Programs and Services at 501-224-0021 or 800-689-6090, or e-mail Janet Nelson at [janet.nelson@alzark.org](mailto:janet.nelson@alzark.org). ▲



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Inside this issue of

# MEDICARE *talk*

Your Medicare information source from the Arkansas Foundation for Medical Care

## SPECIAL REPORT:

### **You and Your Medicines: How to stay healthy and safe**

Knowing more about the medications you take can help you avoid the hospital or home health care.

### **Medicare & Home Health Care: What you need to know**

What to do when you need extra healthcare at home.

### **Take time for those in nursing homes**

Spending time with nursing home residents can mean a lot to them, and to you.

This material was prepared by the Arkansas Foundation for Medical Care Inc. (AFMC), the Medicare Quality Improvement Organization for Arkansas, under contract with the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The contents presented do not necessarily reflect CMS policy. QB1-MT.NEWS,2-4/07

**Learn more  
about AFMC  
and find answers to  
Medicare questions  
on our Web site:**

[www.afmc.org](http://www.afmc.org)

Call AFMC at (479) 649-8501 or on our Medicare helpline at 1-888-354-9100.

You can call AFMC during business hours from 8:30 A.M. to 5 P.M. if you have:

- concerns about the quality of care you receive;
- received a notice of noncoverage from a hospital or other setting stating your continued care will not be covered by Medicare;
- questions about your Medicare rights.

# MEDICARE *talk*

Important Information for People on Medicare from the Arkansas Foundation for Medical Care

## Inside

**Medicare & Home Health Care:**  
What you need to know



**Take time for those in nursing homes**

**Did you know...**  
A new resource could help save your life!



Arkansas Foundation  
for Medical Care

The Medicare Quality Improvement  
Organization for Arkansas

[www.afmc.org](http://www.afmc.org)

## YOU AND YOUR MEDICINES

# How to stay healthy and safe

**I**t's important to take care of yourself at any age. As you get older, you may have to deal with more health conditions...and this may mean taking more medicines.

Your medicines are meant to make you well. But if you take them in the wrong way, you can become sick enough to need hospital care or special home health care. The more you know about your medicines, the healthier you'll be.

### Playing it safe

Medicines don't always work the way they're supposed to. They can interact with other medicines you take or certain foods you eat. They can even be affected by certain medical conditions you may have. If any of these things happen, you could have unwanted side effects. Some of them could even be harmful.

The best way to avoid side effects is to talk with your doctor and pharmacist:

- Make sure they know about every medication you are taking. This includes over-the-counter drugs like cold medicines, antacids, pain relievers and eye drops.

**Please turn to the next page**

**SPECIAL REPORT**



# My Medication Information

It's important to take your medicines the right way. The chart and lists below can help. You can use them to keep a record of your medicines and how your doctor wants you to take them.

The lists don't cover everything, but they will help you get started. If you need more space, use another sheet of paper.

Take this page with you when you go to your doctor. That way, your doctor can give you the right kind of care.

Also share the chart with your family. They can help you keep track of your medicines.

For a longer copy of this form, go to [www.afmc.org/bene](http://www.afmc.org/bene). You can also find information about paying for your medicines.

## MY MEDICINES

Use this section to write down your medicines and when you need to take them. If you run out of room, use a blank piece of paper.

MY NAME \_\_\_\_\_ I AM ALLERGIC TO \_\_\_\_\_

MY DOCTOR IS \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

MY PHARMACY IS \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

| MY MEDICINE'S NAME | WHY DO I TAKE IT? | HOW MUCH DO I TAKE? | HOW OFTEN DO I TAKE IT? | HOW DO I TAKE IT? (With meals, etc.) | HOW LONG DO I TAKE IT? |
|--------------------|-------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------|
|                    |                   |                     |                         |                                      |                        |
|                    |                   |                     |                         |                                      |                        |
|                    |                   |                     |                         |                                      |                        |
|                    |                   |                     |                         |                                      |                        |

## CONCERNS ABOUT MY MEDICINES


Use this section to record your concerns about your medicines. Check the boxes next to the statements that are true for you.

- |   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> I have new medicines.                      | <input type="checkbox"/> I am worried about side effects.              | <input type="checkbox"/> It's hard for me to pay for my medicines. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I have changed medicines.                  | <input type="checkbox"/> I don't always remember to take my medicines. | <input type="checkbox"/> My other concerns: _____                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I don't understand my medicine directions. | <input type="checkbox"/> It's hard for me to read my medicine bottles. | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I don't know how my medicines help me.     | <input type="checkbox"/> It's hard for me to hold small pills.         | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I don't think my medicines help me.        | <input type="checkbox"/> It's hard for me to open my medicine.         | _____  |

## QUESTIONS TO ASK MY DOCTOR ABOUT NEW MEDICINES

Use this section to keep track of questions to ask your doctor about new medicines.

- |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> What is the name of the medicine? What is it supposed to do?                            | <input type="checkbox"/> What do I do if I miss or forget a dose?  | <input type="checkbox"/> Will any tests or monitoring be needed while I am taking this medicine? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Do I take it with water, food, or at the same time as other medicines?                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Are there any other special instructions to follow?   | <input type="checkbox"/> When will the medicine start working? How will I know if it is working? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> How often should I take this medicine? Do I have to take it in the middle of the night? | <input type="checkbox"/> What are the possible side effects? What do I do if they occur?   | <input type="checkbox"/> Is there a cheaper option?  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> How long do I take this medicine?   | <input type="checkbox"/> What should I avoid while taking this medicine (certain foods, drinks, other medicines, dietary supplements, activities)? |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Can it be taken with over-the-counter medicines?  |  |  |

These questions are based on information from the National Council on Patient Information and Education's Web site at [www.talkaboutrx.org](http://www.talkaboutrx.org). 

## Continued from the front page

- Tell them about any herbal supplements, vitamins, creams or ointments you use.
- Let them know if you are on a special diet, if you smoke and how much coffee, tea or alcohol you drink each day. All this will help them figure out which medicine will work best for you.

You should also tell your doctor about your medical history (such as any allergies you have). Your doctor needs to know about all your current and past medical conditions, how you were treated for them, and whether you have seen specialists. Your doctor needs to stay up to date on any changes in your medical condition.

### Helping yourself

It's important for you to keep in touch with your doctor and let him or her know how your body is responding to a medicine. But there

are several things you can do on your own.

- **Always follow your doctor's instructions about how to take each medicine** (including



Make sure you tell your doctor about any herbal supplements, vitamins, creams or ointments you use. They could interact with your medications.

how often you should take them and whether you should take them with food). Ask your doctor to write down the instructions.

- **Take your medicines for the whole time they are prescribed**, even if you feel better sooner.

- **Keep any information that comes with the medicine.**
- **Store all your medicines in a safe place and keep them organized.**

Most medicines should be kept in a cool, dry place, away from bright light. Make sure your doctor tells you if any medicines need to be kept in the refrigerator.

- **Keep all your medicines in the same place, such as a kitchen cabinet or a bedroom shelf.** A bathroom is not a good place to keep most medicines. The heat and moisture from a hot shower or bath can damage them.
- **Make a list of all your medicines.** Write down how and when to take them.
- **Don't wait until the last minute to refill your prescriptions.** Get refills before you actually run out of a medicine.

By staying on top of things, it will be easier for you to stick to your medicine schedule and keep healthy! ▲

## Helpful Web Sites

### Food and Drug Administration

- [www.fda.gov](http://www.fda.gov)
- Click on "Drugs" in the left-hand column and then "Drug Information."

### Medicare

- [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov)
- Click on "Prescription Drug Plan."

### National Council on Patient Information and Education

- [www.talkaboutrx.org](http://www.talkaboutrx.org)
- Click on "For Medicine Users" in the left-hand column.

### National Institute on Aging Information Center

- [www.nia.nih.gov/HealthInformation/Publications](http://www.nia.nih.gov/HealthInformation/Publications)
- Click on "Medications/Supplements."

### National Institutes of Health

- [www.nihseniorhealth.gov](http://www.nihseniorhealth.gov)
- Click on the "Click to Begin" button, and then scroll down to "Taking Medicines."

### U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

- [www.dhhs.gov](http://www.dhhs.gov)
- Click on "Drug & Food Information" in the left-hand column and then "Drugs." ▲

# MEDICARE & HOME HEALTH CARE:

# What **you** need to know

**B**eing in the hospital isn't fun. In fact, you usually can't wait to get home. A special kind of healthcare called "home health care" can help you get better at home after a surgery, procedure or illness. That way, you can avoid going to a nursing home or having to stay in the hospital.

## What is home health care?

There are two kinds of home health care: short-term and long-term. The goal of short-term home health care is to help you get better and get around on your own. The goal of long-term home health care (for chronically ill or disabled people) is to help you stay as well as you can all the time.

Home health care includes skilled nursing care, physical and occupational therapy, speech-language therapy and medical social services. It also includes durable medical equipment (such as wheelchairs, hospital beds, oxygen and walkers) and medical supplies for use at home.

## Will Medicare cover my home health care?

Medicare will cover your home health services for as long as you are eligible and your doctor says you need them. You must also meet all of these conditions:

- You must need at least one of the following types of care on a part-time basis: skilled nursing care, physical therapy, speech-language therapy or occupational therapy.
- The home health agency caring for you must be approved by Medicare (Medicare-certified).
- You must be homebound, or unable to leave home without help.

Medicare will not pay for some types of home health care, including:

- 24-hour-a-day, full-time care at home
- Meals delivered to your home
- Homemaker services like shopping, cleaning and laundry

- Personal care from home health aides (like bathing, dressing and using the bathroom) when this is the only care you need

For more information about home health care or Medicare health plans, call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227). TTY users should call 1-877-486-2048. You may also visit the Medicare Web site at [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov). Scroll down to "Search Tools" and click on "Compare Home Health Agencies in Your Area" to compare how home health agencies in your area measure up on specific aspects of care called "quality measures." ▲

