



## **Medication Management**

Medication management is becoming an increasingly important service offered by The Legacy at Home, especially as more and more seniors are deciding to age in place in their home. Often, doctors prescribe medications – sometimes multiple medications – without thoroughly explaining what the medication(s) is, how it works, and how it should be properly taken. Many doctors' offices today simply give the patients a printout with the details of their medication, and in many cases the patients either don't understand what they are reading or simply never read it in the first place. As a result, many seniors end up taking medications incorrectly – too often, not often enough, or not at all.

### **The Legacy at Home Approach**

When a new client comes to The Legacy at Home requesting medication management services, the first thing we do is a comprehensive assessment. We review all medications – both prescription and over-the-counter – to determine what the client is taking and whether the client is using it correctly. Our clinicians also look at the obstacles that the clients may be facing, such as difficulty picking up the medication, whether they can afford the medication, and whether or not the client understands how and why they need to take certain medications.

Often, we find that our clients are much more comfortable opening up to our clinicians than they are to their doctor or even family members. Many older adults are worried about being judged, and as a result they don't always bring up any questions, concerns or confusion they may have surrounding their medications. However, when they get home, the truth of the situation often hits them, and we see them frequently opening up to their clinicians about questions or concerns about medicines. In this role, the clinician can act as a sort of intermediary between the client and their doctor.

The second step is education. The Legacy at Home clinicians carefully educate the clients on a level they can understand. The importance of education is often underestimated, but it is one of the most critical things we do as clinicians. If we do not teach the clients how to properly take their medication, they simply cannot get better.

Some of the most common mistakes people make when taking medications include:

- Double dosing – forgetting that they have already taken their medication, and taking the same pills again.
- Taking “once weekly” medications daily (then needing refills way too soon).
- Mixing up their medication with their spouse's medication(s).
- Misunderstanding the instructions on the label, such as interpreting “Take three tabs daily” to mean take three times a day.

- Taking certain medications at the wrong time, such as taking a diuretic before bed time, resulting in getting up every hour during the night to go to the bathroom.
- Not altering the dose of an anticoagulant medication (blood thinner) as their doctor instructed following bloodwork done to evaluate if the previous dose was therapeutic.

Occasionally, we run into a situation in which clients knowingly avoid taking their medication. In this case, we first try to get to the root of why they are not taking the medication – whether it is due to perceived negative side effects, the client doesn't think it is working or perhaps the medication cost does not fit into a client's budget. In these cases, we work closely with prescribing physicians to determine if there are other medications available and we again work to educate the clients on exactly why they may need a certain medication or treatment.

### **An Increasingly Utilized Service**

More than 80 percent of adults age 57 and up take at least one prescription medication daily, and many times those are mixed with over-the-counter medications and supplements. This is why medication management is arguably the most important aspect of home health care. Proper administration of medication leads to healthier clients, and it also leads to fewer compounded health complications and cuts down on hospital admissions. At The Legacy at Home, our goal is to ensure the wellbeing of our clients. We encourage them to open up dialogues with their doctors, pharmacists, and their families about the medications they are taking, but we also recognize their independence and do our utmost to respect their privacy and their dignity.