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How to manage medications for your loved one with Alzheimer's

By William Hammond, J.D.

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First of all, remember that it is extremely important for your loved one to take his/her prescribed medications. Not doing so could cause both physical and mental problems and could lead to the emergency room. How best to manage medication will depend on how much medication she takes, how many times a day she takes it and her ability to manage it.

If your loved one is capable of taking her medication and just needs reminders, you can purchase some devices. One of them from ALR Technologies, <http://www.alrt.com>, is inexpensive and the size of your palm. It is called the Med Reminder. It uses a beeping sound and a visual signal as a reminder to take the medication at the prescribed time, day and night.

You will find instructions on how to operate this device on the above website.

If on the other hand, your loved one is in a stage where she cannot remember to take medication, then you, or someone else, for example a nurse or family member, will need to intervene and give it to her. In the mid to later stages of Alzheimer's, you need to observe her taking medication. You should also watch her when eating, as people with Alzheimer's disease begin to have difficulty swallowing as the disease progresses. This is a real concern for those caring for them, as caregivers need to be constantly on alert to intervene if needed.

If your loved one is in a nursing home and you see that the medication is affecting her in a negative way, you may ask the nursing home to change the medication. You may need to make an appointment and let the administrator know that you observed some changes since your loved one started her medication. You can also ask to attend the next planning meeting for your loved one. By law, family members are to be informed and invited to the meetings. If the staff still doesn't want to deal with this issue, you can call the long-term care ombudsman in your state. Ombudsmen are volunteers who have

been trained to advocate for and on behalf of the residents of nursing homes. They will try to mediate between you and the facility.

And remember, you know your loved one best. So trust your feelings and work with the caregivers when managing medication for your Alzheimer's patient.

William G. Hammond, JD is a nationally known elder law attorney and founder of The Alzheimer's Resource Center. He is a frequent guest on radio and television and has developed innovative solutions to guide families who have a loved one suffering from Alzheimer's. For more information you can visit his website at www.BeatAlzheimers.com.

As The Primary Care Giver for an Alzheimer's Patient, How Can I Get a Break?

By William Hammond, J.D.

Taking care of a loved one who has Alzheimer's is a huge responsibility and very time consuming. It can bring a lot of stress, frustration and more. You devote all your time to your loved one and not have time for yourself anymore. You always wonder: when can I take a break from her? It is not an easy decision, but sometimes it has to be made for your own well being.

There are different options to consider. If your loved one is in early/mid stages of Alzheimer's you can consider private duty home care. Many agencies throughout the nation and in your community provide this service. A list of providers can be obtained in the phone book, from the local Alzheimer's Association, Area Agency on Aging, or any case management and referral source. The private duty home care can include services like bathing, sitting, taking to appointments, shopping, meal preparation and other day-to-day essentials. This assistance will definitely help you in getting more free time.

You might also try adult day care. The centers usually operate from 8.00 am to 5.00 pm. It is a good environment for socialization. Your loved one will be able to interact with others, but she knows she will be back home for the night. If you decide to look for an adult day care, you will want to make sure the staff is experienced in caring for Alzheimer's patients.

Another solution is hiring an independent in-home care giver yourself. This person will take care of your loved one while you are away. You may be able to obtain names and information about experienced caregivers from places such as your church, Alzheimer's Association, Area Agency on Aging.

Make sure you check the references. Meet and talk with the prospective caregiver and see how the person interacts with your loved one. Touching is very important. It could be a pat on the back or gently rubbing the hand. You can even ask your loved one for input about the person. People with dementia are often perceptive and intuitive.

And don't forget! You have family members as well that can help you. A loved one who has Alzheimer's affects all family members. So if family members offer to help, take advantage of it.

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Remember, help is available. Do not feel guilty because you want to take a break. You deserve it.

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In the early stage of Alzheimer's, what is the best environment?

Alzheimer's Patients And Verbal Abuse: How To Deal With It

Bath Time For Your Alzheimer's Patient

As The Primary Caregiver, Should I Journal My Feelings About Alzheimer's Disease?

Coping With Alzheimer's Disease

Understanding Acne: Causes, Cures and Myths

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