

## *From the Parish Nurse*

### UNDERSTANDING YOUR MEDICATIONS?

The term 'brown bag' review for medications is a practice that initially started in 1982 when the pharmacist provided a regular brown grocery sack for each individual to place medications in and bring to a designated location at the pharmacy or a community site for review. The practice of having one's medications checked continues today and can be extremely useful not only to the individual but to the physicians providing personal care.

Benefits of a 'brown bag' medication review by a pharmacist include:

- offers an opportunity for better understanding of prescribed medications
- provides guidance regarding common side effects or important adverse drug reactions that require reporting to the physician
- promotes understanding of the best time(s) during the day to take a specific medication
- offers an opportunity to discuss food(s) that may interfere with the absorption of a specific drug
- identification of drug(s) that may interact with each other adversely or duplicate the action of another prescribed drug

In today's world the reality is that individuals often have more than one physician prescribing medications, perhaps a family physician and other specialists. **It is vitally important that all physicians providing care and prescribing medications be aware of what is being taken, regardless of who has prescribed them.**

Additionally, many individuals incorrectly assume that an over-the-counter (OTC) medications and herbal preparations do not count as having the ability to cause harmful interactions or side effects with physician prescribed medications. **The fact is they can interact.** Therefore, it is important to **always tell all care providers and pharmacist both prescribed and over-the counter preparations being taken.**

Would you like a 'brown bag' review of your medications both prescribed and purchased over-the-counter from your local drug store? If so, you need to request an appointment with the pharmacist where you purchase your drugs to review all the medications you are taking.

In the meantime, it is a good idea to prepare the following medication list and carry it with you for future doctor visits or use during an emergency.

Drug Name(s):	Dosage(s):	Directions:	Doctor(s):

**Over-the Counter Medications/Vitamins/Herbal Products:**


Resources; Alan Nathan et. Al. (1999). 'Brown bag' medication reviews as a means of optimizing patients' use of medication and of identifying potential clinical problems. *Family Practice*, 278-282.

*Medication Safety Alert!* (2006). Institute for Safe Medication Practices.

Champs  
Center for Healthy Aging, Ministries, Programs & Services  
13271 Millard Avenue  
Omaha, Nebraska 68137  
Tel: (402) 895-2224  
Website: [www.champsonline.info](http://www.champsonline.info)  
Email: [champs@crossandheart.org](mailto:champs@crossandheart.org)

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