



▶ Preventing Medication Errors.....1



▶ Diabetes and Nutrition2



▶ "FACT FOCUS"
HIGHLIGHTS KEY PARTS OF
EACH STORY

○ ISSUE 1 | ○ VOLUME 1 | ○ Winter 2006

The Safety Net

PROMOTING CHOICE AND OPTIONS IN THE COMMUNITY OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

Preventing Medication Errors

The Importance of Understanding and Following Instructions

Many people with developmental disabilities take one or more medications. If you are assisting someone with developmental disabilities, it is critically important that you understand what medications they take, when they take them, how much they must take each time, and how they should take their medications.

For example, many people with the disease diabetes take the drug insulin at least twice each day. Along with a special diet, the insulin helps them to keep the sugar in their blood within normal levels.

It is important for people with diabetes to take the correct amount of insulin each time. If they take too much, or too little, they may get very sick.

It is also important that they take their insulin at the *correct times* each day. If they take a second dose of insulin too soon after the first, they may have too much insulin in their blood and get very sick. If they take their second dose too long after their first, they may get sick as well.

This is just one example. If you provide support to people who take medication, there are simple, but important, things you can do to help

make sure they take medication safely.

No matter what type of medicine the person takes, **always make sure that you and the individual that you are supporting ask the doctor or pharmacist these questions:**

- 1) **What is the medication supposed to do?** What condition is it used to treat?
- 2) **How long will it be before I know it is working?** Will it take minutes, hours, or weeks?
- 3) **Will a blood test be needed to monitor the medicine?** The effect of some medications must be checked regularly using a blood test.
- 4) **What should I do if the person misses a dose?** The answer will depend on the type of drug and the number of different drugs that the person takes.
- 5) **Should the medication be taken with food or drinks?** If not, how long before or after a meal should the medicine be taken?
- 6) **Are there any foods, drinks, supplements, or activities that should be avoided?**
- 7) **Are there any medications that should not be taken together?**



- 8) **What are common side effects?**
- 9) **If I see side effects, what should I do?** Make sure you know whether to go to the emergency room, call the doctor, or make an appointment to see a doctor.
- 10) **If the drug needs to be taken over a long period of time, what are the long-term effects?**

Always call a doctor or nurse if someone that you support has taken a medication that is not approved for them, if the person has not taken medication that is prescribed for him/her, or if the person has not taken it at the correct time or in the right amount.



FACT FOCUS: Know the Five Rights of Medication Safety!

- 1) **Right Person:** know the person and make sure that their name is on the medication label.
- 2) **Right Medication:** read the label THREE times, and compare the name to the person's log.
- 3) **Right Dose:** read the label for the correct dosage; check for changes in the dosage.
- 4) **Right Time:** read the label to see when and how often it should be taken.
- 5) **Right Route:** read the label to see how the medication should be taken and stored.

For more information, go to www.ddssafety.net.

Diabetes and Nutrition

Many people with diabetes need to follow special dietary plans to control the level of sugar in their blood. If they do not follow their plans, they may get sick because there is too much, or too little, sugar in their blood.

These dietary plans may be complicated, and people with developmental disabilities who also have diabetes may need help from direct support professionals to stay on their plans.

There are two kinds of plans:

1) **Exchange lists** separate food into groups, including meats, fats, and carbohydrates. People with diabetes who use exchange lists must eat foods from each group, in specific amounts, every day. Exactly how much they need to eat is explained in their personal meal plans.

A person's dietary plan for one day might say that he needs to eat seven units, or "exchanges," from the carbohydrate group, six fat exchanges, and seven meat exchanges.

Exchange lists also say what foods in each group count as one exchange.

For example, one slice of bread is one carbohydrate "exchange," which is equal to $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of cereal. Either one ounce of fish or two egg whites equal one meat exchange, and $\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoon of peanut butter or 1 teaspoon of olive oil equal one fat exchange.

A complete list of exchanges is available from a doctor, nurse, or dietician. You can also find more at www.diabetes.org.



2) **Carbohydrate counting** is the other kind of dietary plan used to control blood sugar. People who use this plan count the carbohydrates in a meal before they eat, and then take the proper amount of insulin right before the meal.

Most packaged foods list the amount of carbohydrates in them, so it is not hard to figure out how many units of carbohydrates a meal will contain. A doctor will tell a person with diabetes how much insulin to take for each unit of carbohydrates.

Support professionals working with people who have diabetes and a developmental disability should **know whether each person's dietary plan uses exchange lists or carbohydrate counting**. A doctor, nurse or dietician will know the answer to this question.

- If a person's plan uses **exchange lists**, you should **know how many exchanges of each type a person should eat at each meal**. Support professionals need to check to see that people they work with eat the right number of exchanges.
- If a person's plan uses **carbohydrate counting**, then support staff should **know how to count the carbohydrates in a meal**. Support professionals need to check what the amount of carbohydrates is in each meal and whether the person with diabetes took the right amount of insulin beforehand.

RESOURCES: Diabetes and Nutrition



For information on exchange lists and carbohydrate counting, and on diabetes and nutrition generally, you may want to visit the following web sites.

www.diabetes.org

<https://fnic.nal.usda.gov/>

www.nih.gov (search "diabetes nutrition")

<http://www.childrenwithdiabetes.com/>

www.dietitian.com/diabetes.html

www.webmd.com/content/article/9/1667_50914.htm

www.ddssafety.net

You may also want to call the American Dietetic Association at (800) 366-1655.

Check out www.ddssafety.net for more information that can help individuals with developmental

disabilities live a healthier and happier life!

...Just log on and tell us what you think....