



# PRESS RELEASE

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10 September 2008

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Mixing Medicines May Make You Sick**

If you are like many American adults, you take a handful of medicines every day, and never talk to your doctor or pharmacist about what could happen. You may take something your doctor prescribed, plus an over the counter medicine like aspirin, and maybe an herbal dietary supplement to improve memory, and you could be risking your health if they don't mix well.

Senior citizens are at an increased risk of serious health problems from mixing medicines, and a surprising number of the risks are not the ones you might usually think of. Many causes of illness, hospitalization and death among senior citizens include falls, depression, confusion, hallucinations and malnutrition. These can all be caused by taking medications and supplements that don't work together.

The good news is that many of these issues can be prevented. You may not realize you have a medicine education team – your doctor, his staff, and your pharmacist – as well as medication tools and resources at your disposal. They all can help you learn about the drugs or supplements you are taking and any new prescriptions you may receive.

“Pharmacists are key members of this team and they should encourage patients to take charge of their own health and ask questions,” Stephen Winbery PhD, MD, and Medical Director for QSource, the Medicare Quality Improvement Organization for Tennessee, said. “Healthcare providers also have a responsibility to communicate with patients and make sure they understand the risks and possible side effects of the medications they are taking.”

QSource encourages you and your medication education team to take an active role in preventing adverse drug events by keeping careful records and taking greater responsibility for monitoring those medications. For example:

- Keep careful records of all your medications - prescription, over the counter and dietary supplements – the dosage and how often you take them
- Double check prescriptions to make sure what you received was what was prescribed
- Research what might happen by mixing medications before taking anything new
- Tell your doctor about changes in how you feel after starting a new medication

- Consult with your medication education team about all prescriptions, over the counter medications, and dietary supplements you take regularly

October is “Talk About Prescriptions” Month, a campaign started by the National Council on Patient Information and Education (NCPPIE) in 2000 to bring attention to the importance of good communication about the medications and supplements their patients are taking.

Start talking to the members of your medication education team about what you take. Visit QSource’s website for informative web links, information about drug safety, and tools you can use and share with your friends and team at **[www.qsource.org/drugsafety](http://www.qsource.org/drugsafety)**.