

A Reminder Is Not a Dose (continued)

Do Not Handle Uncertainty Alone

Medication situations are not always straightforward. A caregiver may discover that:

- The client says the medication looks different.
- A pill is found on the floor.
- The medication container appears empty.
- The client says a dose was already taken but cannot remember when.
- Several days remain in a container that should be empty.
- The client refuses to take a scheduled medication.
- The client asks whether two medications can be taken together.
- A family member provides instructions that differ from the care plan.

These situations require communication with the office. The caregiver should not guess, interpret labels beyond the assigned responsibility, or make an independent decision.

If there is an immediate medical emergency, follow emergency procedures and contact emergency services when appropriate.

Never Conceal Medication

Caregivers should not crush medication, place it in food, or hide it in a beverage unless that exact assistance is authorized and properly directed.

Even when a family member says, “This is the only way we can get him to take it,” the caregiver must follow the approved care plan and NHHCP instructions. Concealing medication can remove the client’s ability to make an informed choice and may create a serious safety risk.

Refusal Is Information

A client has the right to refuse assistance. Caregivers should not argue, threaten, shame, or repeatedly pressure someone into taking medication.

A respectful response may be:

“I understand that you do not want to take it. I need to report that you declined so the appropriate person can follow up.”

Report the refusal according to procedure and document what occurred factually. Do not write that the client was “difficult.” Record what was offered, what the client said, and what action was taken.

Watch for Immediate Concerns

Caregivers should remain observant after a client takes medication independently. Sudden difficulty breathing, loss of consciousness, severe confusion, swelling, or

another urgent change may require emergency assistance.

The caregiver is not expected to diagnose a reaction. The responsibility is to recognize that something is seriously wrong and respond appropriately.

Stay Within the Authorized Role

Medication routines can become so familiar that a caregiver begins acting automatically. Familiarity should never replace caution.

The same medication taken every morning still deserves the same attention to the care plan every morning. A client's request, family member's instruction, or caregiver's previous experience does not authorize a change.

A reminder helps the client follow an established routine. A dose involves decisions and responsibilities that may be outside the caregiver's role.

Know the difference, follow the care plan, and call the office whenever the situation is unclear.