**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**
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*Video message from Directors McElroy and Criss:* <https://youtu.be/TOy3j6-Rmig>
*Radio/podcast partners:* [Download audio clips on this topic from the directors.](https://aging.sharefile.com/d-sa2c87bfe07f4e9ab)

**During National Substance Abuse Awareness Month, state agencies
encourage older adults to be safe with medications**

*Older adults are more likely to misuse some medications*

**Columbus, Ohio** – Older adults are at increased risk of complications from medication misuse and abuse. Research has shown that three out of five older adults take their prescriptions improperly. Misuse includes skipping doses, not filling prescriptions, and not following the prescriber's directions. The Ohio Department of Aging and the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services are using National Substance Abuse Awareness Month to alert older Ohioans of the risk and share tips to take, store, and dispose of their medications safely.

“Medication misuse includes taking more or less of a medication than prescribed; taking a medication for a different reason than what it was prescribed for; or sharing or taking someone else’s medication,” said Lori Criss, director of the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services.

“Older Ohioans should be active participants in their health care. This includes talking about medication safety with their health care providers, pharmacists, family members, and caregivers,” added Ursel J. McElroy, director of the Ohio Department of Aging.

Factors that contribute to an increased risk from medication misuse include body changes that affect how we process medications. Older adults are also more likely to take multiple medications prescribed by several health care providers. Further, issues with vision, hearing and brain function can also affect an individual’s ability to hear and understand directions from their health care providers. Possible complications from medication misuse include adverse reactions, depression, confusion, malnutrition, falls, and addiction.

**Steps older Ohioans can take to avoid medication misuse and abuse:**

* Maintain an updated, complete list of medications you take, including prescription and non-prescription medicines, natural and herbal remedies, as well as any vitamins or supplements;
* Discuss your list with all your health care providers who have prescribed or may prescribe medications for you;
* If you have trouble hearing or understanding your health care provider, bring a trusted friend or family member with you to appointments or ask if you can record your visits;
* Ask your pharmacist to explain directions such as “take with food,” “on an empty stomach,” “once/twice/three times/four times daily,” and “as needed;”
* If you’ve been taking a medication for a long time, ask your health care provider if it is still appropriate for you;
* Do not take prescription medications that were not prescribed for you by one of your health care providers and do not share your prescription medicines with others;
* Protect your medications from theft and misuse by others by storing them in areas of your home that are not commonly accessed by others;
* Dispose of unused or expired medications promptly and properly; and
* If you feel that you or a loved one may be misusing medications or exhibiting signs of addiction, talk to a health care provider immediately.

Visit [www.aging.ohio.gov/medicationsafety](http://www.aging.ohio.gov/medicationsafety) for additional medication tips and resources for older adults. For information about addiction services and referral to community supports, call the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services at 1-877-275-6364.

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