



# Let's Talk about Rx<sup>SM</sup>



## CANADIAN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

[LetsTalkAboutRx.ca](http://LetsTalkAboutRx.ca)  
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## INTRODUCTION

Research conducted by Home Instead, Inc., franchisor of the Home Instead Senior Care® network, indicates that as the number of prescription medications a senior age 70+ takes increases, so do that senior's potential medication management challenges and potential health risks. This research found that the majority (57%) of surveyed North American seniors are taking four or more prescription medications daily, with more than one-fourth (27%) taking six or more.

Nearly 20 percent of those surveyed seniors taking five or more prescription medications have reportedly experienced challenges in managing their medication regimen, including keeping track of which medications they have taken and when. These factors appeared to have increased as both age and the number of prescribed medications increased. Such medication management uncertainty could put seniors at higher risk for a medical issue or emergency due to incorrect dosage or adverse medication interactions.

One of 10 surveyed seniors had unintentionally made a mistake when taking medications, which can equate to devastating effects. According to the Canadian Institute for Health Information, about one in every 200 seniors in Canada is admitted to the hospital each year because of an adverse drug reaction, compared with about one in 1,000 in the general population. This translates into about 27,000 people age 65 and older.

While the majority (86%) of surveyed seniors feel confident that they are taking their medications correctly, almost one of five admits experiencing medication challenges around cost, opening medication containers, reading/understanding directions or remembering to order refills.

A majority (77%; 66% of those age 80+) of these seniors overall agreed that the ability to remain independent depends on one's ability to manage a complicated medication regimen. However, overall, seniors feel the ability to do this effectively is based on individual abilities. One-fourth of surveyed seniors (24%) do not feel fully confident that other seniors are taking their medications correctly, further underscoring this problem.

In regards to communication, survey results show that even though half of seniors don't want to burden their family with medication issues, almost all of the surveyed seniors (91%) feel very comfortable discussing their medications with a family member or loved one. The majority of respondents felt communication with family members increased their self-confidence that medications are being taken properly. They additionally felt that proactive communication also helped make their families feel more confident about their senior loved ones' medication management abilities.

To provide families with resources to help identify potential pitfalls facing seniors regarding their medications, the Home Instead Senior Care network has introduced *Let's Talk about Rx*<sup>SM</sup>. This public education program will help family caregivers begin the conversation about why this topic is such an important issue and drive them and their senior loved ones to a number of resources. Among these resources is a free solutions guide to help them understand the potential risks associated with this rising problem and provide tools that can help an older adult manage these issues in the home. The campaign will articulate why an important part of the solution is having someone serve as a second set of eyes and ears, and to provide medication reminders in the home. Other tools and resources in helping families and seniors be alert to potential medication risks also are available on the website referenced below. The goal of *Let's Talk about Rx* is to strengthen the role families can take to help reduce the potential for medication-related health risks, and to help them feel confident about their seniors being safe at home.

The online solutions guide, tools and resources can be accessed at [LetsTalkAboutRx.ca](http://LetsTalkAboutRx.ca).

## KEY FINDINGS

### The Challenge: Medication Safety

- Our survey of North American seniors confirmed that the majority (57%) are taking at least four prescription medications daily. More than one-fourth (27%) are taking six or more.
- Potential challenges appear to increase as the number of prescription medications taken increases.



Nearly **one-fifth** of those taking five or more prescription medications have **experienced challenges** in managing their medication regimen, including keeping track of which medications they have taken and when.



**Cost creates even more challenge** as the number of prescription medications taken rises, according to roughly one-fourth (26%) of the survey respondents.

- Nearly one in five surveyed seniors experiences medication challenges related to:



**Cost**



**Opening medication containers**

(frequency is reportedly twice as high among women)



**Reading/understanding directions**



**Remembering to order refills**

- While a majority (53%) of surveyed seniors claim they know how to properly dispose of outdated/unused medications, four of 10 (39%) reportedly have disposed of them inappropriately.

### Cause for Concern

- One of five (20%) surveyed seniors has some difficulty managing their medications.
- Nearly one of five (17%) surveyed seniors feels overwhelmed at least occasionally by the medications they are taking.
- One of 10 respondents reportedly do not take medications as directed.
- Almost one-fifth of respondents do not have/don't know if they have a full list of medications that they are currently taking.
- One of 10 surveyed seniors has unintentionally made a mistake when taking medications.
- Of those making a mistake, 11 per cent have experienced a medical issue or emergency as a result.
- One-fourth of surveyed seniors (24%) do not feel fully confident that other seniors are taking their medications correctly.

## Seniors Feel Confident

- The majority of seniors surveyed expressed few concerns about their medication management abilities:

**80%**

find it not at all difficult to manage their medications

**86%**

are not at all concerned about taking medications correctly

**87%**

feel very confident after leaving their doctor's office or pharmacy that they understand how to manage their medications

**79%**

of seniors say they help other relatives or friends organize their medications.



## Having the Talk

- Half of the seniors surveyed said that most seniors don't want to burden their family with potential medication issues.
- Almost all seniors surveyed (91%) feel very comfortable discussing their medications with a family member or loved one.
- Over half of respondents felt communication with family members increased confidence among everyone that the seniors' medications are being taken properly.
- A majority (77%; 66% of those age 80+) of seniors surveyed agreed that the ability to remain independent depends on one's ability to manage a complicated medication regimen.

## METHODOLOGY

In North America, Home Instead, Inc. completed telephone interviews with a random sample of 500 seniors in the United States and Canada to identify their perceptions and habits regarding medication safety. Methodology for the survey was as follows:

- Home Instead, Inc. completed 12-minute telephone interviews with a random sample of 500 North American seniors (450 in the United States and 50 in Canada).
- Only seniors who take one or more prescription medications daily were included in the survey.
- The seniors represent three age categories (70-74, 75-79 and 80+).
- Interviews were conducted between Sept. 21 and Oct. 2, 2015.