

While seniors are living longer today than ever before, there are still serious health issues that occur with the aging process, ranging from arthritis and vision problems to hearing loss and forgetfulness. In an effort to help seniors better deal with their health problems, the Institute for Healthcare Advancement (IHA) has identified the 10 most common mistakes seniors make in caring for their health.

"Seniors are enjoying themselves and remaining active much later in life," said Gloria Mayer, R.N., Ed. D., president and chief executive officer of the La Habra, Calif.-based IHA. At the same time, they must take charge of their healthcare. By identifying the most common errors they make when caring for their health, we hope to enhance physician/patient communications, as well as help seniors better understand how the healthcare system works and what they can do for themselves to stay healthy

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for you by

First United Methodist Church  
of  
Niceville, Florida  
214 S. Partin Drive  
Adult & Family Ministry  
678-4411, ext 27



# 10 Most Common Healthcare Mistakes Made by Seniors

## According to Institute for Healthcare Advancement

The Institute for Healthcare Advancement is a La Habra-based non-profit organization dedicated to advancing healthcare delivery through the demonstration of innovative healthcare practices and the education of healthcare professionals and consumers. The Institute provides healthcare information through its various publishing efforts, the Internet, and its renowned local and national education programs.

For more information:

[www.iha4health.org](http://www.iha4health.org)

## **The 10 most common mistakes identified are as follows:**

### **1. Driving when it's no longer safe**

Seniors often associate mobility in a car with their independence, but knowing when it is time to stop driving is important for the safety of everyone on the road. Decisions about when to stop driving should be made together with a family physician because chronological age alone does not determine someone's fitness to drive.

### **2. Fighting the aging process and its appearance**

Refusing to wear a hearing aid, eyeglasses or dentures, reluctant to ask for help, or to use walking aids are all examples of this type of denial. This behavior may prevent the senior from obtaining helpful assistance with some of the problems of aging.

### **3. Reluctance to discuss intimate health problems with the doctor or health care provider**

Seniors may not want to bring up sexual or urinary difficulties. Sometimes problems that the senior thinks are trivial, such as stomach upsets, constipation, or jaw pain, may require further evaluation.

**4. Not understanding what the doctor told them about their health problem or medical treatment plan** "I could not understand the doctor," or "He told me what to do, but you know me, I can't remember what he said" are typical complaints. Reluctance to ask the doctor to repeat

information or to admit that they do not understand what is being said, can result in serious health consequences,

### **5. Disregarding the serious potential for a fall**

Falls result in fractures and painful injuries which sometimes take months to heal. To help guard against falling, seniors should remove scatter rugs from the home and have adequate lighting in the home and work areas. They should wear sturdy and well-fitting shoes. Seniors should watch for slopes and cracks in sidewalks. Participating in exercise programs for to improve muscle tone and strength is also helpful.

### **6. Failure to have a system or a plan for managing medicines**

Missed medication doses can result in inadequate treatment of a medical condition. By using daily schedules, pill box reminders or check off records, seniors can avoid missing medication doses. Because health care providers need to know all of the medicines that a senior is taking, seniors should maintain a complete list of all their prescription and over-the-counter medicines, including dose and the reason that the medicine is being taken.

**7. Not having a single primary care physician who looks at the over all medical plan for treatment** Health problems may be overlooked when a senior goes to several different doctors or treatment programs, and multiple treatment regimens may cause adverse responses. The patient

may be over or under treated if a single physician is not evaluating the full medical treatment program.

### **8. Not seeking medical attention when early possible warning signs occur**

Reasons for such inaction and denial may include lack of money or reduced self worth due to age. "I am so old it doesn't matter anymore." Of course, such treatment delays can result in a more advanced stage of illness and a poorer prognosis.

### **9. Failure to participate in prevention programs**

Flu and pneumonia shots, routine breast and prostate exams are examples of readily available preventive health measures that seniors should utilize to remain healthy.

### **10. Not asking loved ones for help**

Many seniors are simply too stubborn to ask for help, whether due to an understandable need for independence or because of early signs of dementia. It's important that elderly people alert family members or other loved ones to any signs of ill health or unusual feelings so that they can be assessed before the problem advances.