

Planning a Brown Bag Event



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Brown Bag programs encourage consumers—especially seniors—to gather up all their prescription and over-the-counter medications and take them to a pharmacist for review.

The goals of a Brown Bag event include:

- Promoting better patient/pharmacist communications
- Identifying and solving compliance problems
- Spotting duplicate, outdated, and poorly stored medicines

The following material will help you organize and present a Brown Bag program to your patients. Brown Bag programs strengthen the pharmacist’s relationship with the patient, and they can contribute to the well-being of the entire community.

Organizing

- **Identify the best site to reach your target population.** Individual practitioners may want to offer the service to their patients in their own pharmacies. Or you may choose from a wider range of venues—nursing homes, older adult residences, health fairs, senior meal sites and activity centers, club meetings, worksites, college campuses with senior programs, churches, libraries, and grocery stores. If your community hosts a “take back” day, consider hosting the Brown Bag event to coincide with it. If not coordinated with a drug take-back event, have a plan to dispose any medication. Refer to the DEA website (<https://takebackday.dea.gov>) for locations.
- **In addition, set up individual times** with home bound patients who can’t bring their medications to the site.
- **Arrange for a reasonably quiet and private space** for patient interviews.
- **Arrange to have several staff members available.** The most successful programs use people specifically assigned to the program for the entire program. If possible, enlist the help of pharmacy students and interns—it’s excellent training in patient relations.
- **Publicize the Brown Bag services for a successful turnout.** Effective methods include signs and posted notices, direct mail letters, telephone campaigns to special groups, and public service announcements in print and broadcast media.
- **Register patients in advance** to avoid long waiting periods and frustrated participants. The average Brown Bag interview takes about 20 to 25 minutes.
- **Gather professional reference materials** to use at the site. It is also a good idea to have patient education materials on hand—particularly about commonly used medications of senior patients.
- **Telephone registered participants the day before their appointment.** This prevents “no shows” and is a good opportunity to remind participants to bring their medications in the original containers.
- **Develop a checklist for each medication participant.**
 - ▶ Information on prescription and over-the-counter medications (patient’s name, purpose, prescription name, prescriber’s name).
 - ▶ How long has the patient taken the medication? Is it currently being taken? When was the last visit to the prescribing physician to monitor results?
 - ▶ How does the patient take the medication (frequency, schedule, with or without food)?
 - ▶ Are there problems that may inhibit proper adherence?
 - ▶ Communicate the possible side effects and what to do in the event they experience the side effects.
 - ▶ Give the patient information about the proper storage of each medication.
- **Evaluate medication needs and review the patient’s medication review form for:**
 - ▶ Possible interactions with other medicines
 - ▶ Overdose
 - ▶ Appropriateness as a treatment
 - ▶ Unnecessary use
 - ▶ Avoidable regimen complexity
 - ▶ Avoidable side effects
- **Suggest action steps** to the patient verbally and in writing. Recommendations may include discarding outdated medications, changing storage procedures, ideas for better adherence, or seeing the doctor to raise concerns about the regimen.
- **Be sure the patient understands** the purpose of the medication review and is provided concise instructions about any follow-up with his or her prescribing physician or physicians.
- **Follow up with the patient** (or have the patient follow up with his or her pharmacist) at a designated time.
- **Determine whether regimen concerns have been resolved.** Consider consulting with the prescriber yourself, as appropriate.



Presenting

The following outline is an example of what to do on the day of the Brown Bag program. The important thing to remember is that the program meets the needs of the patients it is designed to serve.

- Set up clearly marked greeting and interview areas. Make sure your staff is properly equipped with reference materials, patient information material, and the necessary forms.
- An initial interviewer greets the patient upon arrival. The initial interviewer will take the bag of medications and have the patient fill out a Patient Consent Form and the top portion of the Medication Review Form. These forms are available on the OPSI website at www.ohiohospitals.org/opsi.
- The patient is then introduced to the pharmacist, and the pharmacist receives the bag of medicines and the paperwork.
- The pharmacist reviews the medications with the patient, following the established checklist of review points.
- The pharmacist provides verbal and written recommendations to the patient concerning the reviewed medications. Patient information materials will also be provided at this time to help educate the patient.
- The physician or pharmacist establishes a follow-up time with the patient (or has the patient follow up with his or her pharmacist) and answers additional questions.