

Drug Level Monitoring: Getting The Right Amount Of Medicine For The Right Person

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What Is Drug Level Monitoring?

- Drug level monitoring is measuring how much medication is in someone's body
- It helps providers determine whether the amount is:
 - Too low
 - Just right
 - Too much



Why Drug Level Monitoring Matters

- Have you ever wondered why two people can take the same medicine but need different doses?
- Too much can potentially be harmful
- Too little may not work effectively





Why Isn't One Dose Right For Everyone?

Person A

- 75 years old
- 250 pounds
- Kidney function slowed due to kidney disease
- Liver function slowed due to cirrhosis
- On other medications

Person B

- 35 years old
- 175 pounds
- Normal kidney function
- Normal liver function
- Not taking any other medications

The Risks of Too Little Medication

Potential Patient Concerns

- Mood symptoms return
- Worsening mental health symptoms
- Increased irritability or aggression
- Recurrence of hallucinations

Caregiver Perspective

- Changes in sleep
- Increased emotional distress
- More challenging behaviors
- Reduced participation in daily activities



The Risks of Too Much Medication

Possible Symptoms of Toxicity

- Excessive sleepiness
- Confusion
- Unsteadiness or falls
- Tremor/worsened tremor
- Excessive Stiffness
- Difficulty

Severity of Symptoms

- Can sometimes be managed with a dose adjustment in the prescription
- May need hospitalization
- Can potentially lead to death



Common Psychiatric Medications That Require Monitoring

Lithium

Divalproex (Depakote®)

Carbamazepine

Clozapine

How Drug Level Monitoring Supports Better Care

Benefits for Patients, Families, and Care Teams



- Drug level monitoring can:
 - Improve symptom control
 - Reduce side effects
 - Support medication adjustment
 - Help determine if someone is absorbing the medication correctly
 - Provide objective information during behavioral or psychiatric changes
 - Improve communication between providers, caregivers, support professionals, and patients

What Caregivers and Support Professionals Can Do

Ensure	Ensure medications are given consistently • Ensure timely refills of medications
Track	Track behavioral changes • Especially around dose changes
Monitor	Monitor sleep, appetite, and daily function
Attend	Attend scheduled lab appointments
Communicate	Communicate concerns to healthcare providers
Bring	Bring updated medication lists to appointments

Take-Home Messages

- The same dose does not affect everyone the same way
- Drug level monitoring helps balance benefits and risks
- Caregivers and Support Professionals are essential partners



Questions?

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