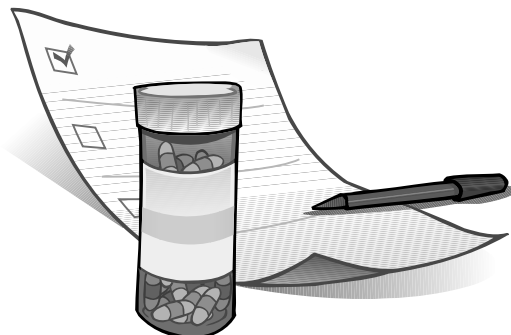


Medicine safety and you

Health care providers are working to make the health care system safer for you. An important member of that health care team is you. As a member, the best thing you can do is be involved in decisions about your health care. This is the best way you can help prevent medical errors.

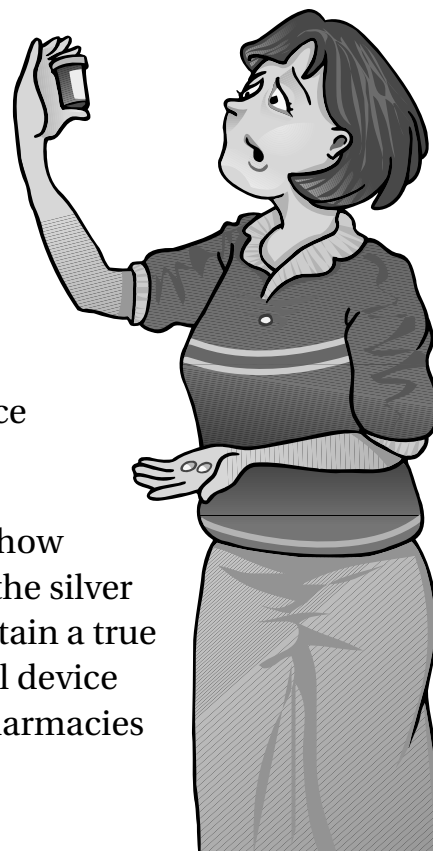
Medicine safety tips

- Be sure every doctor and nurse you see knows what medicines you take. This would include:
 - all prescription medicine
 - over-the-counter medicine (even aspirin)
 - vitamins and other supplements
 - any herbal products
- Keep a list of your medicines and take it with you when you have a doctor's appointment. Ask your nurse for a medicine chart to use, or take all the medicines with you so you can discuss them with your doctor. He or she may not know the contents in some vitamins, supplements or herbal remedies. Having the actual bottle(s) can give this information.
- Be sure your doctor knows about any allergies or bad reactions you have had to any medicine. It is a good idea to have this written down. That's in case a family member has to give your doctor and nurse this information. (Poison Control: 800-222-1222)
- Be sure you can read the handwriting on the prescription. If you can't read it, the pharmacist may have a hard time too.



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- If you are given a prescription, make sure you know:
 - what it is
 - what it is for (why you take it)
 - how you should take it (on an empty stomach, with food, etc.)
 - how often to take it
 - how long to take it
- Ask about any side effects that a medicine might have. It's best to get this in writing:
 - What should you do if you begin to have any of the side effects?
 - If you start having any other side effects, what should you do?
- Ask about food, drink and any activity you should avoid while taking this medicine.
- When you get your prescription filled, ask the pharmacist if the medicine is what your doctor ordered. (Pharmacists can make mistakes too.) Read the label to be sure it says the same thing your doctor told you was being prescribed.
- If you have any questions about your prescription, ask. For example: The label says take it 4 times a day. Does that mean every 6 hours (24 hours in a day divided by 4) or 4 times a day during the hours you are awake? That would mean taking it every 4 hours (since most of us sleep 8 hours a day).
- If you are to take a liquid medicine, ask how to measure it. (You may not know that the silver teaspoon you use at home does not contain a true teaspoon.) Do you need to buy a special device to help you measure the right dose? (Pharmacies sell these devices if you need one.)



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- Take your medicine exactly the way you are supposed to. Follow the instructions on the label or your doctor's advice for taking it.
- Use the same pharmacy for all your medicines. This way your pharmacist will know other medicines you are taking, in case there may be a possible problem with a drug interaction. This can also help you to get an annual record of your medicine costs for tax records, if you need it.
- Do not share your medicine with anyone else. Do not take another person's medicine.
- Do not take medicine after the expiration date on the label. That medicine may no longer work.
- Keep all medicines out of reach for any children in your home.
- Know how to dispose of any medicine that has expired or that you have been told not to take any longer. Ask your nurse for information about this.

