

Medication Safety Tips

Each year at least one million Americans are hospitalized with prescription drug complications. As the number of medicines taken increases, so do health problems caused by drug interactions, side effects, and improper use.

You and your family can lower the risk of such problems by being involved and informed. Take time to learn about your medicines. Talk with your doctor, pharmacist, nurse or other health care providers to get the information you need.

Using Your Medication Matters Card

- List everything you take:
 - prescription medicines
 - over-the-counter products
 - dietary supplements
 - herbal remedies
 - eye drops
 - inhalers
 - oxygen
 - creams/ointments
- List how much, when and why you take each medicine.
- Carry the card with you at all times. Your insurance card will also fit in the plastic sleeve.
- At your doctor's office, present the card for updating.
- At the pharmacy, ask your pharmacist to review the card when a new prescription is added.
- At the hospital, ask your nurse to review the card when you are admitted and again when you are discharged.
- Keep your Medication Matters card up to date; this is very important.
- Take your Medication Matters card and all your medicines to the hospital. Your doctors, nurses and pharmacists need to know what you take.
- Look at each medicine before you take it. If it doesn't look like what you usually take, ask why. It might be a generic, or it might be a different drug. Ask the same questions you would ask at your pharmacy.
- Know what you are allergic to and what reactions you have had, and share this information.
- With the help of your nurses and pharmacists, update your Medication Matters card before leaving the hospital.

Ask Questions About Your Medicine

- What is the name of the medicine and what is it supposed to do?
- How and when do I take it?
- How long do I take it?
- What foods, beverages, other medicines, or activities should I avoid while taking this medicine?
- Are there any side effects, and what should I do if they occur?
- Is written information available about this medicine?

We Care About Your Health!

- Read the label every time and follow instructions carefully.
- Don't chew, crush or break any capsules or tablets without your pharmacist's OK.
- Always take your medicine with 6 to 8 ounces of water.
- Ask your pharmacist how to measure liquid medicine.
- Store medicine out of reach of children and pets and away from household chemicals.
- Never take someone else's medicine.
- Do not save leftover medicines.
- Ask your doctor or pharmacist about using any herbal product.
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Reminder: Whenever you add or stop taking a prescription or other medicine, be sure to update your Medication Matters card.