

How to Reduce Medication Risks



Talk with Your Doctor, Pharmacist, or Other Health Care Professionals

- Keep an up-to-date, written list of ALL of the medicines (prescription and over-the-counter) and dietary supplements, including vitamins and herbals, that you use--even those you only use occasionally.
- Share this list with ALL of your health care professionals.
- Tell about any allergies or sensitivities that you may have.
- Tell about anything that could affect your ability to take medicines, such as difficulty swallowing or remembering to take them.
- Always ask questions about any concerns or thoughts that you may have.
- Use one pharmacist to fill all of your medications.
- Ask for an annual review of your medications.

Know Your Medicines--Prescription and Over-the-Counter

- The brand and generic names.
- What they look like.
- How to store them properly.
- When, how, and how long to use them.
 - How and under what conditions you should stop using them.
 - What to do if you miss a dose.
 - What they are supposed to do and when to expect results.
 - Side effects and interactions.
 - Whether you need any tests or monitoring.
 - Always ask for written information to take with you.



Read the Label and Follow Directions

- Make sure you understand the directions; ask if you have questions or concerns.
 - Always double check that you have the right medicine.
- Keep medicines in their original labeled containers, whenever possible.
- Never combine different medicines in the same bottle.
- Read and follow the directions on the label and the directions from your doctor, pharmacist, or other health care professional. If you stop the medicine or want to use the medicine differently than directed, consult with your health care professional.
- Never take expired medication.
- To get the full benefit of your medication, take it exactly as prescribed by your doctor. It will also help avoid problems such as taking too much or too little of a medicine. Taking medicine in the wrong way can make you worse instead of better.

Avoid Interactions

- Ask if there are interactions with any other medicines or dietary supplements (including vitamins or herbal supplements), beverages, or foods.
- Use the same pharmacy for all of your medicine needs, whenever possible.
- Before starting any new medicine or dietary supplement (including vitamins or herbal supplements), ask again if there are possible interactions with what you are currently using.
- Never take anyone else's medication

Monitor Your Medicines' Effects--and the Effects of Other Products that You Use

- Ask if there is anything you can do to minimize side effects, such as eating before you take a medicine to reduce stomach upset.
- Pay attention to how you are feeling; note any changes. Write down the changes so that you can remember to tell your doctor, pharmacist, or other health care professional.
- Know what to do if you experience side effects and when to notify your doctor.
- Know when you should notice an improvement and when to report back.

Remember: Think it Through and Work Together with Your Doctor, Pharmacist, or Other Health Care Professional to Better Manage the Benefits and Risks of Your Medicines

<http://www.fda.gov/cder/consumerinfo/think.htm>

