

# Speak Up™

## About Your Medications

Medication safety is a team effort. You, your doctor, pharmacist, and other caregivers all have a role in making sure you get the right medication, take the correct dosage, and avoid bad reactions. It's important to know what questions to ask about a new medication and to Speak Up if something doesn't sound right.



### Your medication list is your first responsibility

Make sure to update your medication list whenever you are prescribed a new medicine. Carry your list with you, and share it with your doctor, pharmacist, and other caregivers. Your list should include:

- Prescription medications
- Over-the-counter medications
- Vitamins and other supplements
- Herbs
- Natural remedies



### Questions to ask your doctor about new medications

- How will this medication help me?
- Are there any side effects? What are they and how long will they last?
- Are there other medications or foods I should avoid while taking this medication?
- Should I take this medication with food? Or before I go to bed, if it causes drowsiness?
- What should I do if I miss a dose?
- Can I stop taking the medication as soon as I start feeling better, or do I need to take it until it's all gone?
- What should I do if I cannot afford the medication?

### Questions to ask your pharmacist about new medications

- If the medication is a liquid, does it need to be shaken before use?
- If the medication is a pill or capsule, do I need to swallow or chew it? Can I cut or crush it if I need to?
- Is it safe to drink alcohol with this medication?



### Tips for medication safety

- Learn about the medication you have been prescribed.
- Ask your doctor to include on the prescription why you are taking the medication, so that it will also be put on the medication label.
- If you believe a medication was prescribed in error, call your pharmacy to ask if the prescription was filled correctly. If it was, contact your doctor.

### Tips for medication safety at a hospital

- Make sure your caregivers check your wristband or ask your name before giving you medication.
- Tell your nurse if you think you are about to get the wrong medication if it looks different.
- Tell your nurse if you are getting more or less medication than you normally take.
- Let your doctor know if you don't feel well after taking a medication.
- If you're not feeling up to doing these things, ask a friend or relative to help.

### Tips for safely storing medications

- Store medication in a cool, dry place away from sunlight — such as in a cabinet or drawer.
- Make sure the child safety cap works and store it where children can't get to it.



- Discard unused medication in an environmentally friendly way. Not all medication can be flushed down a toilet or thrown in the trash.
  - o Find out if there is a medication take-back program at your local pharmacy or police station.
  - o Ask your pharmacist how to dispose of unused medication, including syringes and other injectable devices.

If you have doubts about a medication, have questions, are experiencing side effects or reactions that concern you, don't hesitate to ask your doctor, pharmacist or caregiver about it. Speak Up About Your Medications!

The goal of Speak Up™ is to help patients and their advocates become active in their care.

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