

TIPS FOR MEDICINE SAFETY

Taking an active role in your care can help prevent medicine errors. Maintain your own Medicine List and keep it in your wallet or purse for easy access. Remember that your physician, nurse, and pharmacist are there to answer your questions.

Keep a Medicine List

Keep your own list of the medicines you take, including prescriptions, over-the-counter medications, vitamins and supplements. Your hospital, clinic or pharmacy may provide a form you can use; you can also find one created by the Minnesota Alliance for Patient Safety, at www.mnpatientsafety.org or by calling (651) 641-1121.

Or you can get started by just writing down a list of the different medicines you take on a blank piece of paper. When you share this list with physicians, nurses, pharmacists and other providers, it gives them the facts they need to help you stay healthy. Your Medicine List will help them make sure your mix of medications is right for you.

Creating your own medicine list – and keeping it up-to-date – is a simple step that you can take to help ensure your own health and safety.

Know About Each Medicine That You Take

Questions to ask yourself include:

- What is the name of each medicine?
- What is it for?
- What does it look like?
- What time should I take it?
- How much of it should I take each time?
- How should I take it?
- Should I take it with food?
- How long should I take it?
- What should I do if I miss a dose?
- Are there any side effects? What should I do if I have any?
- How should I store it?
- Is it safe to take with other medicine that I am taking, including over-the-counter medicine, vitamins, or herbals?
- What food, drink, or activities should I avoid while taking it?



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At Home

- Keep your medicine list updated.
- Take only the medicine given to you by your physician or pharmacist. Do not share other people's medicine.
- Each time you take your medicine, read the label to make sure you are taking it correctly. If you have questions, call your physician or pharmacist.
- Never take medicine in the dark.
- Do not stop taking the medicine just because you feel better unless your physician tells you to stop taking it.
- Always keep your medicines in the bottles they came in.
- Put all of your medicine in a place where children and pets cannot reach it.
- If you take medicine each day, using a compartmental medication box may be helpful.
- Do not keep medicine in the car, by the stove, or in the bathroom, since heat and dampness can affect how it works.
- Check the date on all medicine. Throw away all medicine if it is expired or no longer needed. (If no expiration date exists on a prescription, consider it expired if you received it more than one year ago.)
- If you feel that any medicine is making you sick or causing you pain, call your physician right away.

At the Doctor's Office

- Always take your updated medicine list. This will tell your physician everything you are taking, including prescription medicines, over-the-counter medicines, and herbals.
- Tell your physician about any allergies or reactions that you have had to any medicine. Write these on your medicine list.

In the Hospital

- When you are admitted to the hospital, take your updated medicine list or bring all of your medicines in the original bottles. Include over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and herbals.
- Tell your physician, nurse, or other provider about any allergies or reactions that you have had to medicine in the past. Also, write these on your medicine list.
- If you feel that any medicine is making you sick or causing you pain, tell the physician or nurse right away.
- When you are being sent home from the hospital, ask your physician or nurse to tell you what medicines you should be taking, and how to take them. You can be given an updated medicine list before you leave the hospital.

At the Drug Store

- Take new medicine prescriptions and refills to the same drugstore. The pharmacist then has a list of your medicines. He or she can make sure that all of the medicine works together and will not make you sick.
- If you use more than one drugstore, make sure each one has a list of all of your medicine.
- Ask the pharmacist the name of the medicine and how you should take it. Make sure that this information matches what your physician told you.
- Make sure that any refill of the medicine is the same color, size, and shape. If there is any difference, ask why.
- If you have ANY questions about your medicine, ask your pharmacist.