

Safe Use of Medications

- Things to tell your doctor:
 - Things you have had an allergic reaction to.
 - If you are pregnant or breast-feeding.
 - If another doctor is also treating you.
 - If you have diabetes or kidney or liver disease.
 - If you use alcohol, tobacco, or drugs.
- See that your doctor has an up-to-date list of all the medicines you take. This includes prescribed and over-the-counter (OTC) ones, vitamins, and herbal supplements. Keep an up-to-date list in your wallet.
- Ask your doctor these questions: What is the medicine for? When should I take it? How long do I need to take it? Should I take it with or without food? Can I crush the pill or open up the capsule if I can't swallow it whole? Write the answers down.
- Give a list of all medicines and supplements you take to your local and mail order pharmacist. Harmful mixtures with other drugs and with foods can be identified.
- Get prescribed medicines from a licensed pharmacy.



Your local or mail order pharmacist can answer questions about medications.

- Keep medicines in their original containers or in ones with sections for daily doses.
- Let your doctor know about your past reactions to certain medicines. As some people age, they may be more sensitive to some medications, such as painkillers or sedatives.
- Ask about the possible side effects of a medication. Find out what you should do if you have any.
- Ask if you can drink alcohol while taking the medication(s). Alcohol can lessen the effects of some medicines. Other medicines, such as sedatives, can be deadly when used with alcohol.
- Don't take someone else's medication.
- Safely discard unused and expired medicines. Use a community drug take-back program. Or, take medicines from their containers and mix them with used coffee grounds or kitty litter. Put this in a sealable bag and place it in the trash.
- Try to reduce the need for some medications, such as sleeping pills or laxatives. A warm bath and a glass of milk might help you fall asleep. Having more fiber in your diet can reduce or replace the need for a laxative. Check with your doctor on ways other than medicines to help treat your problem.
- Even if you feel better, don't stop taking a prescribed medicine unless your doctor tells you to. Also, don't skip doses.



Containers with sections for daily doses and times can remind you when to take medicines.