

YOUR MEDICINES: USE THEM SAFELY!

Medicines help us live longer and healthier. But there are important things to keep in mind to insure you are using them safely.

THERE ARE TWO DIFFERENT TYPES OF MEDICINES

Prescription Medicines are those you can only get with a doctor's order.

Over-The-Counter (OTC) Medicines are those you can buy without a prescription. For example, vitamins, herbal remedies and those to treat pain, allergies or symptoms of a cold.

Make a list of ALL the medicines you take, and share it with your doctor. Some medicines interact dangerously, or reduce the effectiveness, of other medications.

Before purchasing an OTC medicine, read the Drug Fact Labels carefully, and ask the pharmacist to help you choose the right one for you.

TAKE YOUR MEDICINES CORRECTLY

Taken correctly, medicines can be very effective. Taken incorrectly, they can pose a grave danger. OTC medicines have a Drug Fact Label on the package that gives instructions on how to properly take them and any potential side-effects you might experience. Prescription medicines come with a paper insert that provides the same information. If you don't understand these instructions, ask your doctor or pharmacist to explain.

Use a medication box or one-dose pill packets to help organize and manage your daily medicines

Try to incorporate taking medicines into your daily routine. For example, take your morning medicines immediately after brushing your teeth, or take your evening medicines as the last thing you do before going to bed.

Do not crush or dilute medicines until you check with your pharmacist.

Know which medicines should be taken with food or on an empty stomach, and whether there is anything you should not eat or drink while you are on a particular medicine.

Sit or stand when swallowing tablets or capsules to prevent them from getting stuck in your throat, and always drink plenty of water after swallowing tablets and capsules.

Never stop taking a prescription medicine without first consulting your doctor. Some medicines cannot be stopped abruptly without causing serious side effects.

If you notice unpleasant side effects after taking a medicine, like dizziness or an upset stomach, call your doctor.

Never take a medicine that is prescribed for someone else.

Pay attention to the color, size and shape of your tablets and capsules. If they look different when you get a refill, ask your pharmacist to double-check that you have the right medicine.

Store all medicines in a cool, dry place where children, pets and memory-impaired persons can't see or reach them. Call the **Poison Control Center at 1-800- 222-1222** right away if someone accidentally takes your medicine.

Check the medicine label to determine if it should be kept in the refrigerator.

Discard outdated and unused medicines. They will lose their effectiveness and may conflict with medicines you currently take. **Do not dispose of medications in the sink or toilet**, where they will contaminate the water supply. Many pharmacies will accept such medicines and safely dispose of them, and many communities sponsor public medication take-back events.

The Department of Justice has an interactive webpage that can help you locate drop-off locations near you for **narcotics** and other **controlled substances**.

<https://apps2.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/pubdispsearch/spring/main?execution=e2s1>

If you dispose of medicines in the trash, remove them from their containers, mix them with an unappealing substance such as dirt, kitty litter or used coffee grounds and place the mixture in a sealed plastic bag before tossing it in the trash.

AND FINALLY....

Have all of your prescriptions filled at one pharmacy, if possible.

Ask your pharmacist about easy-open containers, and large-print container labels.

Ask if your pharmacy will call, text or email you when it's time to refill a prescription.

Ask your pharmacist if your medicines can be mailed or delivered to your home.

If you cannot afford a prescription medicine, ask your doctor or pharmacist if he/she could recommend a cheaper or generic medicine that would work just as well.

Ask your pharmacist to help you apply for a Prescription Drug Plan or pharmaceutical company's Patient Assistance Program.

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