
Create a Personal Medication Record (PMR)

- A PMR is an up-to-date list of all the medications you take (prescription, non-prescription, vitamins, and herbal supplements). The PMR should include why you are taking each medication and how you take each medication (the dosage and time of day you take them). It should also contain medications that you cannot take due to allergic or adverse reactions
- Keep a copy of your PMR with you at all times (in your wallet or handbag)
- Make a copy for your family member or caregiver
- Bring your PMR with you whenever you visit your doctor's office, the pharmacy, or the hospital so it can be reviewed by your healthcare provider

Ask Your Doctor Questions

- What is the name of the medication (both the brand name and the generic name)?
- What is the medication for? How will it help?
- How do I properly take it and for what length of time?
- What are the possible side effects? What do I do if I experience a side effect?
- Is the medication safe to take with my other medications, including non-prescription medications, vitamins, and supplements?
- Are there any foods, beverages, other medicines, or activities that I should avoid while taking this medication?

To show that you understand your medication instructions, repeat the information back to your doctor. If you don't understand something, don't be afraid to ask for an explanation. Bring a family member or friend with you if that would make you feel more comfortable. Write down the answers to your questions.

Play a Part in Managing your Medication

- Follow the directions given by your doctor. For over-the-counter medications, follow the directions on the label, unless otherwise directed by your doctor
- Talk to your doctor or pharmacist if you experience side effects
- Never remove the label on the prescription bottle or store more than one medicine in the same bottle

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- Do not take your medication in the dark where you cannot read the label properly
 - Do not stop taking any medication or change the amount without consulting your doctor
 - Do not skip doses or cut your doses to save money. Talk to your doctor or pharmacist if you cannot afford your medications. There may be less expensive choices or special programs to help with the cost of certain drugs

Remember ...

- When you pick up your medication from the pharmacy, make sure it is the medication your doctor prescribed
- Take advantage of your right to counseling by the pharmacist. You can ask the pharmacist (just as you did with your doctor) to explain how to properly take the drug, what the side effects are, and what to do if you experience side effects
- Store your medicines away from heat, moisture, and direct light
- Check the expiration dates on your medications and throw away outdated medication
- Use one pharmacy for all your prescriptions, especially if you see more than one doctor. This can help the pharmacist track any potential interactions
- Get prescriptions refilled early to avoid running out of medicine and disrupting your medication schedule (many prescriptions require your doctor to renew them)

Drug Safety Medication Tips References

1. American Society of Health-System Pharmacists[®]. *Safe medication: Using medications safely* [Internet]. Bethesda (MD): ASHP; c2009 [cited 2009 Mar 27]. Available from: <http://www.safemedication.com/safemed/MedicationTipsTools/WhatYouShouldKnow/UsingMedicationsSafely.aspx>.
2. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. *Patient fact sheet: 20 tips to help prevent medical errors* [Internet]. Rockville (MD): AHRQ; 2000 Sep [cited 2009 Mar 27]. Pub. No. OM00-0004. Available from: <http://www.ahrq.gov/consumer/20tips.htm>.
3. U.S. Pharmacopeia. *Just ask!...About proper medicine use* [Internet]. Rockville (MD): USP; c2009 [cited 2009 Mar 27]. Available from: <http://www.usp.org/hqi/patientSafety/resources/justAsk/>.