



Tips for Safe Medication Use and Storage

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- Keep updated lists of all medicines. Use our Health Care Note book Tracking Worksheet to record this. Include prescription drugs, over-the-counter medicines, and herbal and vitamin supplements. Share this list with your physician and pharmacist.
- Be sure that medications are out of reach of any children or anyone who might misuse them. This is especially true of medications that look like water or soft drinks.
- Check to see that medications needing refrigeration are stored in an area where they will not freeze. Make sure the medications are kept separate from other foods. You might want to store them in a box or container that sets them apart.
- Take medication where there is good light so the medicine label can be seen clearly.
- Store medicine in its original container. Do not mix different medications together in the same container. This will make it difficult to identify during an emergency.
- Store all medicines in one designated location together. The location should be a dry and cool place. The kitchen and bathroom are bad places to store medicine because of the heat and moisture generated.
- Do not share medications prescribed to you with others.
- Discard any medication that has expired or that your physician has discontinued.
- Also, if there is no label on the container, throw out the medication. Be sure to throw out medication in a way that animals or children will not get to them.
- When injecting a medication, be sure that you are comfortable with preparing and administering the medication. Nurses or pharmacists should teach you the proper techniques.

When your physician prescribes a new medication, do the following:

- Ask about the benefits and risks of the medication.
- Ask about how and how often the physician will need to check the effects of the medication.
- Tell your physician about all the medicines you are already taking. Bring either a list of medications or a bag of all the medications with you to your appointment.
- Tell your physician about whatever preferences you have about medication. For example you might prefer fewer dosages or avoiding certain side effects.
- Make sure your physician is aware of any of your allergies.
- Make sure your physician is aware of any other illnesses or diagnoses for which another health professional is treating you.
- After agreeing upon a medication with your physician, make sure you have the following information (request written information to take home, you can also ask the pharmacist about any of the following):
 - Name of the medicine.
 - What it is supposed to do.
 - How, when, how much, and how long you should take the medication.
 - What food, drinks, activities or other medicine you should avoid while taking the medication.
 - What are the side effects?
 - What to do if you experience side effects.
 - What to do if you miss a dose.
 - How many refills you will need.
 - How the medication should be stored.