

## Medication Safety Tips

<b>Ask about safety risks</b>	Over-the-counter medications and herbs used for problems such as pain, runny nose, cough, or trouble sleeping may cause harm. Ask your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist about safety risks before taking them.
<b>Make a list</b>	<p>Keep a list of all the medications you take. Include on the list:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The reason you take each medication (example: for diabetes).</li><li>• The dose of each medication you take (example: one 10mg tab).</li><li>• When you take each medication (example: at bedtime, or every Monday 30min before breakfast).</li><li>• The way you take each medication (example: by mouth or eye drops).</li><li>• Any over-the-counter medications, vitamins, or herbs you take that are not prescribed by your doctor.</li><li>• Write down any allergic reactions or bad side effects to drugs you have had in the past.</li></ul> <p>Bring this list to all of your medical appointments.</p>
<b>Update your list</b>	<p>Remember to update your list:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• At every medical appointment—if you see more than one doctor this is VERY important!</li><li>• After any surgery or hospital visit.</li><li>• When any medication is started, stopped, or the dose is changed.</li><li>• Tell your doctor if there is any change in over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, or herbs you take.</li></ul>
<b>Read the pill bottle</b>	Check the medication label to make sure you are taking the right dose of the right drug at the right time. Follow directions on how to take the medication. For example, some medications should be taken on an empty stomach, while other medications should be taken with food. Check the expiration date on the bottle to make sure the medication is not too old.








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<b>Simplify</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Try to get all of your medications from the same pharmacy. This helps the pharmacist get to know you so that they can help you avoid harmful drug reactions or side effects.</li><li>• Tell your pharmacist about any allergic reactions you have had to medication in the past.</li><li>• Make sure your doctor or nurse is aware of all of the medications you take including any medication prescribed by a specialist.</li></ul>
<b>Ask questions</b>	<p>For any new medication, be sure to ask your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What is the reason for taking the medication?</li><li>• When and how should the medication be taken?</li><li>• What should you do if you miss a dose?</li><li>• What side effects or warning signs of a drug reaction should you watch out for?</li><li>• Is it safe to drive, use machinery, or drink alcohol when taking these medications?</li><li>• Is a lower-cost medication available?</li><li>• Ask for help if you have difficulty with:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Remembering to take your medications,</li><li>○ Opening pill bottles, or</li><li>○ Reading medication labels.</li></ul></li></ul>
<b>Report problems</b>	<p>If you begin to have new symptoms after starting a new medication, you may be having a reaction to the drug. Call your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist right away if you start to feel any new symptoms such as those listed below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• drowsy or confused</li><li>• upset stomach</li><li>• dizzy or losing your balance and falling</li><li>• headache</li><li>• skin rash</li><li>• constipation or diarrhea</li></ul> <p>If you have a serious reaction, such as difficulty breathing or swelling in your throat, call 911 and go to the emergency room.</p>

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<b>Always</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Always</b> throw away medication that has expired.</li> <li>• <b>Always</b> make a list of your medications and know what each one is for.</li> <li>• <b>Always</b> ask questions.</li> <li>• <b>Always</b> get medications refilled before you run out.</li> <li>• <b>Always</b> use a pillbox, calendar, medication log, and/or alarm to help you remember to take your medications.</li> <li>• <b>Always</b> keep a three day supply of medication in case of an emergency.</li> <li>• <b>Always</b> store medication as directed and keep it away from children.</li> </ul>
<b>Never</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Never</b> share your medication with someone or take medication that is not prescribed to you.</li> <li>• <b>Never</b> take medication that has expired.</li> <li>• <b>Never</b> stop taking medication without talking to your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist first.</li> <li>• <b>Never</b> take more or less medication than it says to on the drug label without talking to your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist first.</li> </ul>

### Common drug reactions you should tell your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist about right away:

<p>Upset stomach</p> 	<p>Headache</p> 	<p>Constipation or diarrhea</p> 	<p>Drowsiness</p> 
<p>Itchy skin or rash</p> 	<p>Confusion</p> 	<p>Dizziness or losing your balance and falling</p> 	

**This is not a complete list of possible side effects. If you have ANY new symptoms after starting a new medication—call right away! If you have a serious reaction such as difficulty breathing or throat swelling, call 911 and go to the emergency room.**

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## References

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