



## Know Your Medications

### Bring a list or a bag with all your medicines when you go to your doctor's office, the pharmacy, or the hospital

Include all prescription and over the counter medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements that you use. If your doctor prescribes a new medicine, ask if it is safe to use with your other medicines. Remind your doctor and pharmacist if you are allergic to any medicines.



### Ask questions about your medicines

Ask questions and make sure you understand the answers. Ask for written instructions about your medicines. Make sure you understand the instructions. Choose a pharmacist and doctor you feel comfortable talking with about your health and medicines. Take a relative or friend with you to ask questions and remind you about the answers later. Write down the answers.

### Make sure your medicine is what the doctor ordered

Does the medicine seem different than what your doctor wrote on the prescription or look different than what you expected? Does a refill look like it is a different shape, color, or size than what you were given before? If something seems wrong, ask the pharmacist to review the medication and prescription for you.

### Ask how to use the medicine correctly

Read the directions on the medication bottle and all other information you get with your medicine. If you don't understand something on the label or in the instructions, ask the pharmacist or doctor to explain. Ask if there are other medicines (including non prescription medicines, vitamins and herbal remedies), foods, or activities (such as driving, drinking alcohol or using tobacco) that you should avoid while using the medicine? Ask if you need lab tests to check how the medicine is working or to make sure it doesn't cause harmful side effects.

### Ask about possible side effects

Most medications have the potential to cause some sort of side effects. Some can be minor and some can be an indication of something more serious. Ask your doctor or pharmacist what side effects to expect and which ones are serious. Some side effects may bother you but will get better after you have been using the medicine for a while. Call your doctor right away if you have a serious side effect or if a side effect does not get better. A change in the medicine or the dose may be needed.

