



MEDICATION SAFETY

Healthcare providers prescribe medication to millions of Americans each day to help stop pain, treat infection or prevent illness ⁽¹⁾.

Research has shown 50% of medicines prescribed are not taken correctly. This can lead to serious health problems, additional medical treatment, hospitalization, loss of work, or even death ⁽²⁾.

To make informed decisions and use medication correctly, it is important to be involved in your healthcare. You can do this by talking with your doctor about your medical history, asking questions about your medicine, learning more about your condition, following directions on how to take your medicine, and notifying your doctor of any side effects or problems ⁽³⁾.

As an informed healthcare consumer, you can take an active role in learning about your medications and why you take them.

Here are some things you can do to protect yourself and others from potential harm ⁽²⁾:

- Keep an updated list of all your medicine in your wallet or purse
- Know *why* you take your medications
- Always check the medicine bottle and label for accuracy
- Use a weekly pillbox to organize your medicine
- Use the same pharmacy

Understanding the importance and dangers of taking medicine is essential to help you achieve the greatest benefit from your prescription. Please consider these tips ⁽⁴⁾:

- Take all medications as prescribed
- Do not crush or break pills unless directed
- Inform your doctor about any over-the-counter medicine you take
- Discuss any questions, problems or side effects with your doctor and pharmacist
- Do not change your medication dosage without talking to your doctor first
- Do not use expired medications
- Always read and follow storage directions on the medication label

For more information on medication safety, please visit the following web-links:

Medication Safety Information:

- [Your Medicine: Be Smart. Be Safe](#)
- [Safe Storage and Disposal of Your Prescription Medicines](#)
- [Managing Your Medicines: A Patient's Guide to Saving Time and Avoiding Mistakes](#)

References:

1. [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)
2. [Consumer Health Information Corporation](#)
3. [Food and Drug Administration](#)
4. [Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality](#)

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