



MEDICATION SAFETY

Healthcare providers prescribe medication to millions of Americans each day to help alleviate pain, cure infection or prevent illness ⁽¹⁾. Research has shown that 50% of medications prescribed are not being taken correctly. This can often times lead to serious medical complications, additional medical treatment, hospitalization, loss of work or even death ⁽²⁾.

To make informed decisions and use medications more effectively and safely, it is important to be actively involved in your own healthcare. This can be accomplished by talking with your physician about your medical history, asking questions regarding your medications, learning the facts about your condition, following directions on how to take your medication and notifying your physician of any side effects or problems ⁽³⁾.

As an informed healthcare consumer, you can take an active role in learning about your medications and the reasons you are taking them. Here are some important things you can do to protect yourself from potential harm ⁽²⁾:

- Keep an updated list of all your medications in your wallet or purse
- Know *why* you take your medications
- Discuss any questions, problems or side effects of your medications with your physician and pharmacist
- Always check the medication bottle and label for accuracy

- Use pillboxes to organize your medications

Understanding the importance and dangers of taking medication is essential to helping you achieve the greatest benefit from your prescription. Here are some helpful tips to consider ^(4, 5):

- Take all medications as prescribed
- Do not crush or break pills unless directed
- Inform your physician about any over-the-counter medications you are taking
- Always use the same pharmacy
- Do not alter your medication dosage without talking to your physician first
- Keep all medications out of the reach of children
- Do not use expired medications
- Always read and follow the storage directions on each medication label

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

Medication Safety Information:

- [Your Medicine: Play It Safe](#)
- [Safe Storage and Disposal of Your Prescription Medicines](#)
- [Medicines In My Home](#)
- [Taking Control of Your Medicines and Your Health](#)

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](#)
5. [WebMD](#)

Author: Karen Hulsmeier, R.N.

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