

4 Ways To Be Smart and Safe with Medicines*

1. Tell Your Health Care Team Important Information



- **All medicines** you are taking including:
 - Prescriptions
 - Medicines you can buy without a prescription, such as aspirin, antacids, laxatives, allergy medicine, and cough medicine
 - Vitamins, herbals (such as St. John's Wort or Gingko Biloba), and diet aides
- **Any allergies** (such as medicines or foods) or **problems** when taking a medicine.
- **All medical problems** you have, like diabetes or high blood pressure.
- **Any issues with paying for medicines** because there may be other medicines that cost less and will work the same.

2. Get the Facts about Your Medicine



- **Ask questions** about your medications to your doctor or nurse.
- Ask your doctor to write down why you need the medicine... for example, not just "take once a day" but "take once a day for high blood sugar."
- Asking questions now may prevent problems later.



3. Stay with Your Treatment Plan

Now that you have the right medicine, you'll want to take the medications as they are ordered, but that is not always easy. Medicines may cause side effects. Or you may feel better and want to stop before finishing your medicines.

- **Take all the antibiotics** you were prescribed. If you stop taking them before finished, the infection could come back and be harder to treat.
- **Ask your doctor** if your prescription needs to be **refilled**. You may need your medicine for a long time.
- **Tell your doctor** if you are having **side effects or other concerns**.
- Your medicine was prescribed only for you. **Never give** your medicine to anyone else **or take** medicine that wasn't prescribed for you.
- **Ask if you need blood tests** to see if the medicine is working, if it is causing any problems, and if you need a different medicine. **Ask your doctor** to tell you what the tests showed.

4. Keep a Current List of Your Medicines

- **Ask your health team** to help you write a list.
- Keep the list up to date with all changes.
- **Include all:**
 - Prescriptions
 - Non-prescription medicines
 - Vitamins
 - Herbal and diet aides and/or supplements



More medication safety information for patients and caregivers and a wallet card:
<http://www.ahrq.gov/consumer/safemeds/yourmeds.pdf>

*Information adapted from: <http://www.ahrq.gov/consumer/safemeds/yourmeds.htm>