



# Prescription Safety



Over the next two weeks we are focusing on prescription safety. This week covers the doctor's visit and trip to the pharmacy. Next week we will cover prescriptions at home and in the hospital.

## Tips for Avoiding Medication Errors At the Doctor's Office

- Before your appointment, make a complete list of all medications you take, including prescription and non-prescription medicines and nutritional supplements. Whenever your medications change, be sure to update your list.
- Ask your doctor to explain your prescription, including the drug name, how often you should take it and what the purpose of the medication is.
- As you age, some drugs may affect your body differently, so ask your doctor periodically if it may be time to adjust dosages of medications you have been taking for a long time.



- What should the medication my doctor prescribed look like?
- How much should I take and how often?
- Is there a best time to take it?
- How long will I need to take it?
- Are there potential side effects, and what should I do if they happen?
- What should I do if I miss a dose?
- Does this medication interact with my other medications or with any foods?
- Does this medication replace anything else I have been taking?
- Should I avoid any liquids, foods, other substances or activities while using this medicine?
- Could I become tolerant, dependent or addicted to this medicine? If so, how can I avoid this?
- Where can I get more information about this medicine?
- If the directions say to take the medication every three or four hours, ask if that means throughout the night as well as during the day.
- Is this medication available in a child-resistant container?
- What is this medication's expiration date?

## At the Pharmacy

Pharmacists play a major role in preventing medication errors. Using one pharmacy will help your pharmacist keep a complete record of all your prescription medicines and cross-check for potential drug interactions. If you get an emergency or mail-order prescription filled elsewhere, bring the container to your usual pharmacist, so the information can be entered into your file.

When picking up a prescription, be sure your pharmacist gives you printed information about your medication and you have clear answers to the following questions:

- What are the brand and generic names of the medication?

When you buy over-the-counter medications, read the labels carefully – they may contain ingredients you do not want or should not take. Ask your pharmacist for help if you have difficulty selecting the right product.

Source:  
[www.RxForSafety.com](http://www.RxForSafety.com)

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