



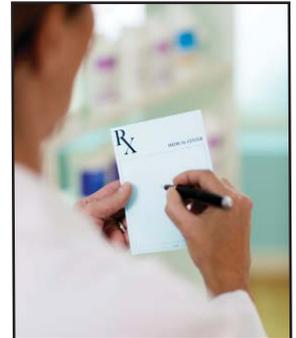
PRESCRIPTION DRUG SAFETY

Medication Safety Tips

If you are uncertain about any of your medications, do not hesitate to **ask your doctor or pharmacist questions**. They are available to help!

When the Doctor Prescribes Medication for You

- Ask your doctor to *print* his or her name and the name of any new medications on the prescription slip.
- If you do not understand why you are taking a medication, ask your doctor to explain more about your new medication.
- Telling your doctor about all prescription and nonprescription medications you are taking, including over-the-counter (OTC), herbal, vitamin, and dietary supplements, can prevent dangerous drug interactions. *Don't forget to mention any allergies you may have.*



When Picking Up Your Medication

- Just like with your doctor, be sure to tell your pharmacist about all prescription and nonprescription medications you are taking, including OTC, herbal, vitamin, and dietary supplements. *Once again, mention any allergies you may have.*
- Ask the pharmacist for a patient information sheet explaining your new medication. If you have any questions about your medication, be sure to ask the pharmacist.
- Look at the label carefully when you get a new medication to ensure that you understand all of the instructions.
- If you are picking up a refill, look at your medication label and contents to ensure that nothing looks different from the previous medication.
- Count the pills you are given and make sure the number matches the amount indicated on the label – *this is especially important with controlled substances such as pain pills.*
- Does your new prescription medication contain acetaminophen? If it does, check all OTC medications you may take while using your prescription medications to see if the OTC drug products *also* contain acetaminophen. Taking two medications with acetaminophen can cause an overdose or lead to liver damage.



Visit the Use Safely section of www.AWARErx.pharmacy to learn more.

When Taking a Medication

- Remember to turn on the lights and get your glasses. It's easy to mistake one pill bottle for another. Make sure to double-check and read the label *every time*.
- Prioritize your appointments for scheduled laboratory tests or follow-up visits. Monitoring helps doctors and pharmacists know if your medication is working.
- Do not take extra doses of your medication, especially with pain medication.

Do You Take More Than One Medication?

- Try using a pillbox or several pillboxes that hold medications for a week, and label your boxes, eg, AM; noon; PM; bedtime. Be sure to keep this out of reach of children and guests in your home.
- Calendars or medication journals can help you remember whether you have taken your medications each day and on time.



Medication Errors Can Happen – What Next?

- If you take too much medication or do not feel well after taking your medication and you cannot reach your doctor or pharmacist, call 800/222-1222 immediately to reach poison control from anywhere in the United States.
- If you miss a dose of your medication, ask your doctor or pharmacist what to do.

Want to Know More?

- Ask your pharmacist or doctor to review the medications you are taking at least once a year.
- Keep a medication journal in your purse or wallet so that you can take it to doctor's appointments and your pharmacy when you are picking up new medication(s), which will help your doctor and pharmacist manage your drugs appropriately.
- Store your medications as instructed by the pharmacist and keep them in their original containers.
 - Invest in a medicine safe or install a lock on a cabinet for medicine storage; otherwise, store your medications in a hidden location that is out of sight to children and guests.
 - Heat and moisture (think bathroom medicine cabinets) can decrease the effectiveness of medications, as well as freezing temperatures, so avoid locations with these atmospheres.
- The safe disposal of expired or unwanted medications can prevent misuse and abuse.
 - Medications are considered expired if they are one year from the date the prescription is filled, unless otherwise noted.
 - Do not discard medications where small children or pets can find them.
 - Some medications, such as certain pain pills and fentanyl patches should be flushed down the toilet to avoid children's and pet's accidental exposure. Visit the Dispose Safely section of the www.AWAREx.pharmacy to learn more.
- Do not share medications prescribed for you with anyone else or take medications that are not prescribed to you.



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