

## Healthy Living: Use Your Medicines Safely!<sup>1</sup>

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Medicines can help us feel better, but they also can harm us if they are not used correctly. To use your medicines safely, keep the following tips in mind.



**Keep your health care providers informed. Make sure all of your doctors and your pharmacist always know all the medicines you are taking.**

This includes prescription and over-the-counter medicines, herbal products, and vitamin/mineral supplements. Also, remind them about any drug allergies or reactions to medicines you have had in the past.



**Do “one-stop shopping” for all your medicines. Fill all of your prescriptions at the same pharmacy.**

This will keep all of the prescription medications you take on one your record. Your pharmacist will be able to alert you and your doctors of possible problems. Let your pharmacist know if any of your doctors tell you to stop taking any of your medicines so it can be noted on your record.



**Make sure you can read the medicine label and understand the directions.**

Ask the pharmacist to use large type on your prescription medicine if it is hard to read. Read labels on over-the-counter medicines too. Use a magnifying glass if it's too small to read.



**Keep a record at home of all the medicines you take.**

Keep a copy of your medication record in your medicine cabinet or desk and carry one with you. Write down:

- the name of the medicine
- the reason why you take it
- when you take it
- how much to take
- how long you need to take it
- if it has side effects (like sleepiness or constipation)



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**Call your doctor right away if you have any problems with your medicines.**

If you are worried that a drug might be doing more harm than good, talk to the doctor who prescribed it. He or she may be able to change your medicine to one that will be better for you.



**Check the expiration date on medicine bottles. Throw away outdated medicines.**

Safely throw away medicines that have passed their expiration date. Ask your doctor if you need a new prescription.



**Ask your doctor or pharmacist if you should take your medicines with or without food.**

Certain foods and beverages should be avoided when taking some medicines. Sometimes it is better to take medicine with food to help avoid stomach irritation.



**Do not take more or less than the prescribed amount of any drug.**

Your doctor knows what dose is right for you. If you think you should be taking more or less than the recommended amount, talk to the doctor who prescribed it.



**Do not drink alcohol when you take your medicines.**



Some drugs may not work well or may make you sick if taken with alcohol. Ask your pharmacist if alcohol can affect the medicines you are taking.



**Never take someone else's prescription medicine.**

Medicine prescribed by a doctor is not meant to be shared. It may work for one person, but be dangerous for someone else.

**If you have any questions about your medicines, ask your doctor or pharmacist!**

**To learn more about using medicines safely:**

Call the Food and Drug Administration through its toll-free number: 1-888-463-6332, or visit this Web site: [www.fda.gov](http://www.fda.gov).

Contact the AARP Pharmacy Service at 1-800-456-2277 or visit this Web site: [www.aarppharmacy.com](http://www.aarppharmacy.com).

Visit the American Pharmaceutical Association's Web site at: [www.pharmacyandyou.org](http://www.pharmacyandyou.org).

Visit the Florida Department of Environmental Protection at [www.dep.state.fl.us](http://www.dep.state.fl.us) to learn how to safely dispose of unwanted medicines.