

Your Health: Tips for Taking Medicine Safely



Take your medicines exactly as prescribed.

Call your doctor if you think you are having a problem with your medicine.

Have a routine.

Try to take each of your medicines at the same time each day. This makes it less likely that you will miss a dose. Make a list of your medicines, and post it someplace where you will see it often. The list should include the name of each medicine, the dose, how often you take it and when, and any special instructions (such as whether you take it with meals or on an empty stomach).

For example, if you take a blood thinner, your list might say something like:

You can take an active role in staying healthy by making sure you take your medicines safely. The following tips can help.

Medicine Name	Dose	Notes	Morning	Afternoon	Evening	Bedtime
Warfarin	5 mg	Blood thinner	½ tablet before breakfast			

Try using a weekly medicine organizer. You can buy an inexpensive plastic pillbox with a space to hold each day's medicine. Be sure to keep at least one pill in each original bottle to help you identify the medicine.

A few medicines must be stored in their original containers so they don't spoil. If your medicine label has this instruction, then don't use a pillbox for that medicine.

Keep your doctor informed.

Make a list of everything you take. Keep a copy in your purse or wallet, and take it to each doctor or hospital visit. Anytime you see a new doctor, show him or her your list.

Remember to include herbs, vitamins, and over-the-counter medicines on your list. They can cause problems when you take them with other medicines. For example, ginseng and garlic may increase your chance of bleeding. This could be dangerous if you take aspirin or warfarin, which also raise the chance of bleeding.

Store medicines properly.

Keep medicines in a dry, cool place. Only keep your medicine in the refrigerator if your doctor or pharmacist tells you to.

Do not use expired medicine.

Always check the date on the label. If the medicine is expired, check with your doctor or pharmacist to see if you can get a refill.

Throw away old or unwanted medicine safely.

Find out if your local trash and recycle center offers a medicine take-back program for medicines that are expired or no longer used. Do not throw away a medicine with the rest of your garbage unless you mix the medicine with cat litter, coffee grounds, or another substance that would deter children and other people from taking the medicine if they found it.

Keep medicines away from children.

Store all medicines out of the reach of children. Keep medicines in their original child-resistant containers.

Do not share medicines.

It is never a good idea to borrow medicines or share medicines with another person.

Know how to take your medicines.

Read the information sheet that comes with prescription medicine. If you have any questions, ask your doctor or pharmacist.

Find out what to do if you miss a dose.

Use one drugstore for all your medicines.

Before filling any new prescription, give the pharmacist your list of medicines. Ask about possible interactions with any other medicines you are taking.

If you fill prescriptions at more than one drugstore, make sure each of them has your list.