Managing Medicines at Home

Usage

- Know the drug name, dosage, instructions and reason you are taking each medicine.
- Know the side effects of your medicines and when to report them to your doctor or nurse.
- Keep a current list of all medicines, allergies and your pharmacy phone number in your wallet or purse and give a copy to a family member or close friend.
- Review your complete medicine list with your doctor at every visit.
- Take your medicines at the times and in the amounts ordered by your doctor.
- Do not stop taking your medicine without talking to your doctor first.
- Take antibiotics for as many days as your doctor ordered them, even if you feel better.
- Inform your doctor and/or nurse of any over-the-counter medicines that you are taking. (Examples: aspirin, Tylenol, cold medicines, vitamins, herbal supplements, etc.)
- Keep a daily log of when you take your medicines. Always use a tracking log when there are multiple caregivers giving medicines to a loved one.

Safety

- Keep your pain, anxiety, muscle relaxants and controlled medicines in a secure and private location.
- Keep all medicines out of reach of children.
- Do not allow any family members or friends to borrow or take your medicines.
- Use only one pharmacy for your prescribed medicine needs.
- If you are concerned that your family members may be taking your medicines, then keep them in a locked box.

Tracking

Many products can help remind you to take your medicine on time and keep track of the doses you take. There are:

- containers you can fill with your pills for each day of the week
- calendars to check off
- products that fit on top of a pill bottle and
- products that dispense medicines and/or give verbal reminders

Ask your pharmacist for help finding the right product for you.
Discarding

• Do not save outdated medicines or ones that you are no longer taking.
• Clean out your medicine cabinets in fall and spring when you change the batteries to your smoke alarms.

Solid and liquid medicines
1. Remove from the original container and put the contents into a hard plastic container, such as a laundry detergent bottle.
2. Liquefy solid medicines by adding a small amount of water to dissolve them.
3. Add a thickening material such as cat litter, flour, salt, charcoal or coffee grounds. Nontoxic powdered spice, such as turmeric or mustard, may be added to discourage wildlife or young children from trying to eat the resulting material.
4. Recap and seal the container with duct tape.
5. Place it in the trash just prior to pick-up.

Blister packages (foil-wrapped pill containers and patches)
1. Keep these items in their original packaging.
2. Wrap the pack with a thick tape, such as duct tape.
3. Place the pack into a hard plastic container, such as a laundry detergent bottle.
4. Seal the container and place in the trash just prior to pick-up.

Tips

• Be informed—ask your physician about your medicines.
• Use the “Be Informed” handout to help guide your medicine conversations.
• If you need surgery or a procedure, ask if you should stop taking medicines beforehand.
• Carefully read the printed information that comes with your medicine.
• If you have problems reading the small print on pill bottles, ask your pharmacist for larger labels.
• Do not mix different pills in the same bottle when traveling.