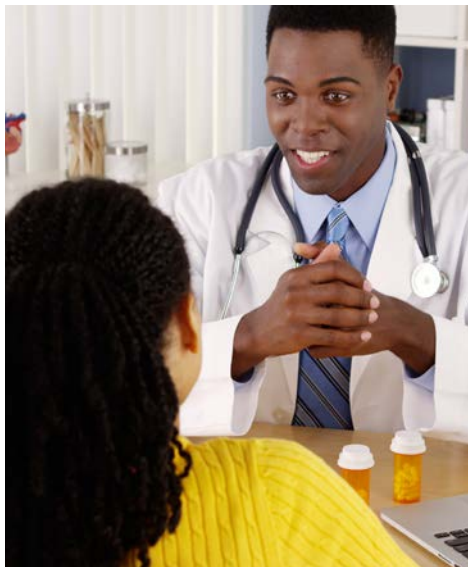


# To Use Medications Safely

## ASK YOUR DOCTOR

- What is the name of the medicine? Is this the brand or generic name?
- What does the medication do? How will I know when it is working?
- What side effects should I expect? What do I do if they occur?
- When should I start to feel better?
- Does this new medication replace anything else I am taking?
- What do I do if I miss a dose?



## For more information,

contact the Ohio State Medical Association  
toll-free at 1-800-766-6762  
or visit the following web sites.



[www.ohiopatientsafety.org](http://www.ohiopatientsafety.org)

This guide to safe medication use was prepared by the Ohio Patient Safety Institute and the Public Relations Committee of the Ohio Hospital Association, in conjunction with Ohio's allied hospital associations and the Ohio State Medical Association.



**Medications contain powerful chemicals that cause changes in your body. It is very important to use them correctly.**

Your doctor, nurse and pharmacist are trained to help you use your medication safely. But you, as a patient or family member, are the most important member of the health care team. You share the responsibility for safe medication use. Make sure you know your medications, how to take them and why you take them. If there is anything you don't understand about your medications, keep asking questions until you do.

**This guide will help you use medications safely and know what questions to ask.**



## ASK YOUR PHARMACIST

- What is the name of the medicine? (If the name is different than what your doctor told you, ask why.)
- How should I take this medicine and for how long?
- Are there any side effects?
- Should I avoid alcohol, certain foods or activities while taking this medicine?
- Should I take this medicine with food (breakfast/lunch/dinner)?
- How will this medicine interact with other medications I am taking, including over-the-counter and herbal medications?
- Could I have some written information about the medicine? Is it available in large print or a language other than English?
- What should I do if I run out of this medication? Can I get a refill? When?

## ORGANIZE YOUR MEDICATIONS

Complete the Medical Information Record.

Put a copy of this card where others can find it in case of emergency—in your purse or wallet, on your refrigerator and in the glove compartment of your car.



*NOTE: Include all over-the-counter (non-prescription) medications, home remedies, herbal medications including tea, vitamins and weight gain or loss products such as shakes, pills or bars. Sometimes they can be dangerous when you take them with other medications.*

- Show your card to your family doctor, your pharmacist and others involved in your care at every visit.
- If you take many different medications or have medications ordered by different doctors, schedule a “brown-bag checkup”
- Place all your medications and over-the-counter products in a bag and take them to your doctor or pharmacist so he/she can look for any potential problems.
- Store your medications in a dry area that does not have changes in temperature. Do NOT store them in the bathroom, over the stove or in the car.
- Keep your medications out of reach of children and pets.
- Keep your medications in their original bottle/container. **EXCEPTION: If your doctor or pharmacist suggests a daily or weekly medication box, ask how to use it. Some medications should not be stored together or need special storage.**

- Each time you take your medication, read the label and make sure you are taking it correctly.
- Throw away all products that are outdated or have not been used in a while. Ask your pharmacist how to properly dispose of these medications.
- Never share your medications with others or take another person’s medications.

## BE YOUR OWN BEST HEALTH CARE CHAMPION

- Talk with your doctor or pharmacist if:
  - you have any questions about your medications,
  - you notice a change in how a medication looks, or
  - you notice a change in instructions for taking a medication.



- Tell your doctor, nurse or pharmacist about allergies or any side effects or reactions you have had before accepting any new medication.



- Get medical help right away if you develop itching or swelling or if you have trouble breathing after taking a new medication.
- Take notes about what you learn at your doctor’s office and pharmacy. You may want to take a friend or family member with you to write down information.
- Try to use the same pharmacy or drugstore for all your prescriptions so your pharmacist has a complete record of all your medications and can give you the best advice.
- Always check prescriptions before you leave the store to make sure the medication is for you and is labeled clearly. Make sure refill medications look the same as before.

