

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO AVOID MEDICATION ERRORS

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- **Maintain a list of prescription drugs, nonprescription drugs and other products, such as vitamins and minerals, you are taking. Don't forget herbal remedies you may be taking, as well as any special tests you may have had recently. These could react negatively to your prescribed medications.**
- **Take this list with you whenever you visit a health care provider and have him or her review it.**
- **Be aware of how and where to find educational material related to your medication(s) in the local community and at reliable web sites.**

Information sources include:
Institute of Medicine
Institute of Safe Medication Practices
Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality



- Have the prescriber explain how to use the drug properly.
- Ask about the drug's side effects and what to do if you experience a side effect.

PHARMACY

- Make sure the name of the drug (brand or generic) and the directions for use received at the pharmacy are the same as that written down by the prescriber.
- Know that you can review your list of medications with the pharmacist for additional safety.
- Know that you have the right to counseling by the pharmacist if you have any questions. You can ask the pharmacist to explain how to properly take the drug, the side effects of the drug, and what to do if you experience side effects (just as you did with your prescriber).
- Ask for written information about the medication.

HOSPITAL INPATIENT CARE

- Ask the doctor or nurse what drugs you are being given at the hospital.
- Do not take a drug without being told the purpose for doing so.
- Exercise your right to have a surrogate present whenever you are receiving medication and are unable to monitor the medication-use process yourself.
- Prior to surgery, ask whether there are medications, especially prescription antibiotics, that you should take or any

that you should stop taking preoperatively.

- Prior to discharge, ask for a list of the medications that you should be taking at home, have a provider review them with you, and be sure you understand how these medications should be taken.

!! IMPORTANT !!

- Do not let anyone give you medications without checking your hospital identification bracelet every time. And, before you take the medicine, look at it carefully. If it doesn't look like what you usually take, ask why immediately.
- Make sure health care workers who have direct contact with you have washed their hands. If you are not sure, or have not seen them do so, ask. Hand-washing is an important way to prevent the spread of infections.
- Make sure that **all** your health care providers know what medicines you are taking. Today's practice of medicine is highly specialized. Thus, you may be seen by more than one provider.
- Don't forget to ask the Pharmacist if you have any questions about the directions on the label. Medicine labels can be hard to understand. Ask if "four doses daily" means taking a dose every six hours around the clock, or just during regular waking hours. And, ask for the best device to measure your liquid medicine.

AMBULATORY CARE / OUTPATIENT CLINIC

- Have the prescriber write down the name of the drug (brand and generic, if available), what it is for, its dosage, and how often to take it, or provide other written material with this information.