

How to Take Medications Safely

We've all heard about medication errors. They don't occur often. But sometimes a prescription might be filled incorrectly because it was difficult to read. Or there might be interactions between two drugs you're taking. So what can you do to take your medications as safely as possible?

The most important thing is to get involved. Ask questions. Find out what you need to know. For example:

- **When you visit your doctor, take all your medicines with you.** Take prescription drugs, over-the-counter medicines, dietary supplements and herbal remedies — everything you're using. This information will help your doctor update your records and avoid prescribing a medicine that might interact with another one you take.
- **Be sure to tell your doctor about any allergies you have and any problems you may have had with medicines taken in the past.** This will help your doctor prescribe a medicine that's right for you.
- **When your doctor hands you a written prescription, look at it.** Can you read it? Remember, getting the right medicine depends on your pharmacist being able to read your prescription correctly. If you can't read it, ask your doctor to print it out.
- **When you get your prescription, ask the pharmacist if it's the one your doctor prescribed.** Check both the name and the dose on the label against the prescription.
- **Before you leave the pharmacy, ask questions about any medicine your doctor prescribes.** You should know what the medicine is for, how long you're supposed to take it, when and how you should take it (for example, with or without food) and whether it's safe to take with your other medicines or supplements. You should also know about possible side effects and what to do if you have any problems. If your pharmacist doesn't provide this information, just ASK.
- **Keep and read the printed information that comes with your prescription.** This information can help you recognize any side effects that you might experience and take the appropriate steps.

Good communication with your doctor and pharmacist will help you get the best results from your medicines, so don't be shy. Remember, information is your best protection.

To find out more about prescription drugs, treatment options, health conditions and even herbal remedies, visit the website for Express Scripts, the company chosen to manage your prescription benefits. Just go to www.express-scripts.com.