

We want you to be SAFER!

Medicines – prescription and over-the-counter – can help you feel better, but they also have risks and side effects. Risk is the chance of something bad happening by taking the medicine. Side effects are when something that is not planned happens by taking medicine. There is no such thing as a completely safe medicine. But to be SAFER, you should always:

- **Speak up**
- **Ask questions**
- **Follow directions**
- **Evaluate your choices**
- **Read the label**

Speak up!

- Tell your doctor about your medical history.
- Share your allergies (food, seasonal, soaps, medicine)
- Tell your doctor if you are going to have a baby, are nursing, or if you are planning to have a baby.
- Keep an up-to-date list of your medicines with you at all times. Include prescriptions, over-the-counter drugs, vitamins, herbs and nutritional supplements.
- Talk to your doctor if you have a hard time taking your medicine like trouble swallowing, reading the label, can't remember to take it on time, too many to take, cost, etc.
- **If you can't read the doctor's prescription, chances are the pharmacist can't either. Ask the doctor to write it clearly so it can be read and why you are taking it.**

Ask questions!

Ask your doctor or pharmacist:

- Why am I taking this medicine? How often do I take it?
- Do I take it with food, water or on an empty stomach?
- If this drug is a "once-a-day" dose, should I take it in the morning or at night?
- If the dose says "three times a day", should I take it every 8 hours or at morning, noon, and night?
- What should I do if I miss a dose?
- Does this drug replace anything else I am taking?
- What could be the side effects of this medication?
- When do I stop taking the medication?
- Is it safe to drink alcohol with this medicine?
- Does this drug interact with any other drugs I am taking?
- Should I avoid any other drugs, foods, liquids, activities, or dietary supplements while I'm taking this medicine?
- Is this a brand or generic drug? Can I take a generic? Is it paid for by my health plan?
- **Ask for information in words you understand, even if you have to ask more than once.**

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| <p>Follow directions!</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take the medicine exactly as your doctor ordered. • Never stop taking a medicine without checking with your doctor first. • Finish the medicine as directed – <i>even if you feel better.</i> • Check the name of the drug you are taking. Many drugs have common names, but different uses. Example: Xanax (for anxiety) and Zantac (heart burn) and Zyrtec (allergies). • NEVER share your prescription drugs with someone else. • Always make sure it is the <u>right</u> medicine, for the <u>right</u> person, in the <u>right</u> amount, in the <u>right</u> way, at the <u>right</u> time. |
| <p>Evaluate your choices!</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pay attention to how you feel while taking your medicine. Call your doctor if you have any side effects or problems. • Ask what you can do if you have side effects, or if they will go away after a short time. • Ask if you need to have any tests when taking this medicine. (With some drugs, your doctor will keep track of blood work or how well your kidneys are doing.) • Ask when the medicine will begin to work and ask how you will know if it is working • If you have problems, ask your doctor if there is another drug you can take in place of this one. |
| <p>Read the label!</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you would feel safer with a label printed in Spanish or another language, ask your pharmacist to do this. • For liquid medicine, be sure to use a measured tube or syringe. Or ask the pharmacist for a small measuring cup with “ml” or “oz” on it, and ask to have it marked. • Does the name of the drug on the label match the name the doctor called it? Is the dose amount and timing the same as your doctor told you? |

Remember:

Get rid of medicine when it has expired:

1. *Take medication to a hazardous waste collection program if your community has one OR*
2. *Black out the patient’s name, add water to the original container, double bag the medication container, and put it in your trash.*

Keep ALL medicine out of the reach of children.

Never tell children that medicine is candy.

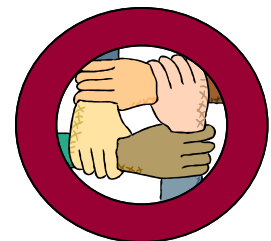
Try to use the same drug store for all of your prescription needs.

Get refills soon enough so you won’t miss a dose.

To save money, try using a mail order pharmacy if available.

Tell all your doctors what medications you are taking at each visit.

Other sources of medication safety information: www.ismp.org; www.ahrq.org; www.fda.org.



*Working Together To Improve
HealthCare Safety*

**Michigan Inter-Plan Patient
Safety Council**