Safety Tips for Using Medications

At Home:

- Use a medication box or other system to manage your daily medications. Ask your pharmacist for suggestions.
- Write out your medication schedule and keep it with your medications.
- Always drink plenty of water after swallowing a tablet or capsule.
- Sit or stand when swallowing medications. This prevents them from getting stuck in your throat.
- Do not crush medications until you check with your pharmacist.
- Never take medications prescribed for someone else.
- Never stop taking a medication without first consulting your physician.
- Keep medications out of the reach of children and memory-impaired persons.
- Store all medications in a cool, dry place. A closet may be preferable to a medicine cabinet.
- Discard outdated medications, and those left over from a previous prescription. Old medications may have lost their potency, or may conflict with medications you are currently taking.

AT THE DOCTOR’S OFFICE AND THE PHARMACY:

- Get clear instructions regarding your medications:
  
  **Purpose:** What condition is the medication meant to treat?
  **Dose:** How many doses do I take per day, and at what times?
  **Duration:** How long must I take the medication?
  **Effects:** How will I know if the medication is working?
  **Side Effects:** What possible side effects should I look for?
  **Restrictions:** Should I avoid certain things while I’m taking the medicine? (alcohol, sun exposure, over-the-counter preparations, etc)
  Should I take the medication with or without food?

Bring your medications, or a list of your medications, with you every time you visit your doctor. Be sure your doctor is aware of any over-the-counter medications, vitamins or herbal remedies you are taking.

If you see more than one doctor, tell all your doctors about your current medications and whether you have had allergies or side effects to any medications.

- Have all your prescriptions filled at one pharmacy, if possible.
- Ask your pharmacist about generic medications, which may be equally effective as brand name medications, but less expensive.
- Ask your pharmacist about easy-open medication containers.
- Ask your pharmacist for large-print labels on your medication containers.
- Ask your pharmacist whether your medications can be delivered to your home.
- Ask your pharmacist about medication boxes and memory-jogging devices to help you take your medications correctly.
- Ask your pharmacist if any of your medications will interact (work against each other).
- Ask your pharmacist if medication for any one of your medical problems can complicate other medical problems you have.
- Ask your pharmacist for help selecting non-prescription medications. This is especially important if you already take medications for: arthritis, diabetes, glaucoma, heart disease, high blood pressure, kidney disease, nervous conditions, sleep disorders.

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