

Help avoid mistakes with your medicines

Patients need to be active participants in their care. You can do this by following these tips.

A lot of people are responsible for your medicine—including you!

- Check all of your medicines with your doctor to make sure they are OK to take together.
- Check with your pharmacist to see if there are other medicines, foods or drinks you should not take with your new medicines. This helps to avoid a bad reaction.
- Give your doctors, pharmacists and other caregivers a list of all your medicines. This list should have your
 - prescription medicines
 - over-the-counter medicines (for example, aspirin)
 - vitamins
 - herbs
 - diet supplements
 - natural remedies
 - recreational drugs
 - amount of alcohol you drink each day or week

Check your medicines and ask questions

- Make sure you can read the handwriting on the prescription. If you can't read it, the pharmacist may not be able to read it. Ask to have the prescription printed.
- Read the label. Make sure it has your name on it and the right medicine name.
- Understand all of the instructions for your medicines.
- If you have doubts about a medicine, ask your doctor, pharmacist or caregiver about it.
- Call your doctor or pharmacist if you forget the instructions for taking a medicine.
- Don't be afraid to ask questions about any of your medicines.

How to avoid medicine mistakes at the hospital or clinic

- Make sure your doctors, nurses and other caregivers check your wristband and ask your name before giving you medicine. Sometimes patients get a medicine that was supposed to go to another patient.
- Don't be afraid to tell a caregiver if you think you are about to get the wrong medicine.
- Know what time you should get a medicine. If you don't get it then, speak up.
- Tell your caregiver if you don't feel well after taking a medicine. Ask for help immediately if you think you are having a bad reaction.
- You may be given IV (intravenous) fluids. Read the bag to find out what is in it. Ask the caregiver how long it should take for the liquid to run out. Tell the caregiver if it's dripping too fast or too slow.
- Get a list of your medicines—including your new ones. Read the list carefully. Make sure it lists everything you are taking. If you're not well enough to do this, ask a friend or relative to help.

The goal of the Speak Up™ program is to help patients become more informed and involved in their health care.