

# Managing Your Medications

No matter how healthy of a person you are, you will probably end up taking an over the counter or prescribed medication at some point in your lifetime. According to the Institute for Safe Medication Practices, two out of every three patients who visit their doctor leave with at least one prescription. While taking medications may be a common practice, as many as 50% of people take medication incorrectly. Take all of the prescribed medication as directed by your physician. Don't stop taking an antibiotic for an infection just because you feel better in a couple of days as you can have a relapse or build up resistance to that medication in the future. Here are some tips to help you use medications safely:

#### **Tell Your Doctor:**

- If you are taking any over the counter medications on a regular basis
- If you are taking any dietary supplements (some of these may interfere with prescription medications)
- Any current medications you may be taking (especially if prescribed by another physician)
- How you take current medications (if different than prescribed)
- Any allergies to any medications

#### **Before You Leave the Doctor's Office:**

- Know the name and type of drug prescribed
- Ask when/how to take the medication
- Ask if any foods or other drugs can interfere with this medication
- Ask about any possible side effects and what to do about them
- Check if any lab tests will be required to monitor this drug
- Ask if there is any written information on this drug
- Ask if this drug can be refilled
- Ask how the drug should be stored

If your physician can not answer some of these questions, ask your pharmacist for more information. Other substances that may affect drug absorption or cause harmful side effects if combined with certain drugs are alcohol, caffeine and cigarettes. Please check with your doctor or pharmacist if it is safe to consume any of these substances while taking prescribed or over the counter medications. Also, if you become pregnant while on any medication, check with your physician if it is safe to continue taking any medications or supplements.

Finally, if you are taking medications for chronic conditions like high blood pressure, diabetes or other heart problems, use a calendar to log your medication use. The calendar can be a great tool to record blood pressure, blood glucose or weight change information if you are self-monitoring any of these items. The more information you can share with your health care providers, the better they can judge if a medication is working for you and how to best manage your medical conditions to keep you healthy and help you stay out of the hospital.

Source: American Society of Health-System Pharmacists

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