

# Tip Sheet for Medication Management

1. Make sure that all your doctors and health management members know about every medication you are taking. This includes prescription and over-the-counter medicines, and dietary supplements such as vitamins and herbs.
  - At least once a year bring in all your medications in a brown bag so your doctor can take a look at them.
  - It is recommended to keep all your medication in a central location such as a “brown bag” or zip lock bag.
  - If you are seeing a new doctor, bring your “brown bag” of medications so the doctor can take a look at your medications.
  - If you are transported to the emergency room, ask your family to bring all your medications to the emergency room.
  - Alcohol can interact with many medications. Be sure to let your doctor know the amount of alcohol you consume.
2. Make sure your doctor and health care team knows about allergies and adverse reactions you have had to medicines.
  - If you have an allergy that is not reported, you may be prescribed a medicine that can harm you.
  - Keep a list of medications you have allergies to and what type of reaction you had to them in your wallet or handbag.
  - If you have had side effects to a medication and your doctor stops this medication, consider this an allergy even if your doctor did not call it one.
3. When your doctor writes a prescription, make sure you can read it.
  - If you can not read it, chances are your pharmacist might not be able to either.
  - Ask your doctor to explain the reason, dose, and frequency, for the medication in terms you can understand.
  - Make sure to find out how long to take the medication and what are the likely side effects.
  - Ask your doctor what food, drink, or activities should be avoided while taking the medication.
  - Make sure to ask if the medication is safe to take with your current medication and dietary supplements.
4. When you pick up the medication at the pharmacy, make sure to have the pharmacist explain the same things about the medication that the doctor explained.

If there is any difference in what the doctor told you and what the pharmacist tells you about your medication – seek clarification.

If you have any questions about the directions on your medication labels, ask for clarification. For example: if the label states “four times a day” ask is this every six hours or four times a day while awake.
5. If taking a liquid medication, make sure to obtain a marked medication cup or syringe to measure the medication. Do not use household teaspoons!
6. Talk to your doctor before starting any over-the-counter medication.

## Tip Sheet for Medication Management (Continued)

7. Keep medications that you are currently taking separate from those you take on an as-needed basis.
  - If medications are **expired** – **throw away**. Expired medications can react in your body in unpredictable ways!
  - Do not share medications with others even if they state they have taken the medication before.
8. Take all medications for the amount of time indicated on the label.
  - Stopping some medications abruptly can have many side effects up to and including death. Talk to your doctor before discontinuing any medication.
  - Do not stop taking antibiotics because “you are feeling better.” This can cause serious side effects.
  - Do not stop taking antibiotics early to save medication for the next time you get sick.
9. Keep medications in the bottle that they are prescribed in unless you are using a weekly pillbox.
10. Take medications at the same time of the day every day. This keeps a stable level of the medication in your body.
11. Do not take two doses of a medication if you forget a dose unless you were instructed to do so by your doctor.
12. If you are unable to open prescription bottles, ask your pharmacist for adult (non-child proof) prescription bottles.
13. Keep all medications out of the reach of children.
14. If you have poor vision, difficulty remembering your medications, multiple medications, or difficulty opening bottles, consider using a pillbox.
  - Ask a family member or friend to fill your pillbox on a weekly basis.
  - Make sure to get a pillbox that has four boxes per day if you are taking medications four times a day.
  - Make sure the box you have is easily opened and contains all the days of the week.
  - If you are vision impaired, boxes with Braille are available.