

# MANAGING YOUR MEDICATIONS

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Medicines are powerful chemicals used to treat disease, heal injuries, and relieve pain. Used properly, they can treat everything from headaches to heart disease. If used carelessly, medicines can cause unexpected danger. Instead of relieving symptoms, they can cause poisoning and, in some cases, death.

The medicines you should know about include herbal preparations, over-the-counter drugs, (those you can buy without a prescription) and prescription drugs (chosen by your physician and sold by a pharmacist). Before you use any medicine, your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist should be told if you ever had an allergic or unusual reaction to any medicine or food.

## ***Be sure you understand***

- The medication's name.
- Why you are taking it.
- How much medication you should take and how to take the medication.
- Side effects and the symptoms of side effects you should report to your doctor.
- Activities you should avoid while taking certain medications.

## ***Follow Instructions***

- Do not take anyone else's medications.
- Do not take over-the-counter medications unless they are approved by your doctor.
- Do follow any safety precautions.

## ***Hints***

- Always ask your doctor or nurse about any questions you have.
- Ask for any easy open container if you find that childproof containers are too hard to open.
- Discard any expired medications by flushing them down the toilet.
- Turn on a light when taking any drug at night so you can read the label.
- Store medications away from heat, moisture and direct sunlight. Keep out of reach of children.
- Avoid storing your medication in the bathroom medicine cabinet.
- When traveling, carry your medications on your person; do not put them in your luggage. Carry your doctor's name and phone number with you.

## ***Develop a System***

It might be helpful to keep tabs on your medications. If necessary, have someone help you. Here are a few ways to make a chart:

- *Basic Medicine Chart* – On a large sheet of paper, write down what medicines to take and what times to take them. Also note how the medicine should be taken.
- *Color Coded Chart* – For your ease, you can color code your medication containers, using colored markers, pens, pencils, etc.

- *Check-Off Chart* – List your medicines for each day of the week. Write down what times each day to take them. Cross out the time when you've taken the medicine.

If you need more information about medications and how to take them, please discuss your concerns with your physician or nurse.