

# MEDICINE SAFETY

## TIPS FOR CONSUMERS

You are part of your medical team. Speak up. Ask questions. Understand your medicine. The more information you have, the better able you are to prevent medicine errors.

### Be smart. Be safe... at home.

#### DO:

- ✓ Make a list of your medicines including doses, why you take them, and how often you take them
  - Any time that your medicines change, update your medicine list
  - **Include all over-the-counter medicine, vitamins, herbal products, and allergies**
- ✓ Talk to your healthcare provider or pharmacist if you have questions about:
  - Taking your medicine as prescribed
  - The importance of keeping medicine in their original container
  - Why you should not skip doses or stop taking the medicine without discussing it with your doctor first
  - Any new health problems you are experiencing that could be due to your medicines
- ✓ Know how to store your medicine; storing incorrectly may affect the medicine
- ✓ Check the expiration date on the medicine label; don't take expired medicine
- ✓ Take liquid medicine with only the cup or other measuring device that came with it; household teaspoons and tablespoons are not accurate
- ✓ Remove expired, unwanted, or unused medicines from your home as quickly as possible to avoid misuse by others (check with local law enforcement or your pharmacy for help with disposing medicines)

#### DO NOT:

- ✗ Take someone else's medicine; it may interact with your medicines, the dose may be wrong for you, or you may be allergic to it
- ✗ Chew, crush or break capsules or tablets unless instructed

Nearly  
**1 in 5 adults**



take **5 or more**  
medications

Adverse drug events  
(ADEs) account for nearly

**350,000** hospital  
admissions

**1.3 million** emergency  
department  
visits

each year

Nearly **5%** of hospitalized  
patients experience ADE



## Be smart. Be safe... in the hospital.

### DO:

- ✓ Take your medicine bottles and the list of your medicines with you when you go to the hospital
- ✓ Tell hospital staff if you use more than one pharmacy to fill your medicine
- ✓ Look at all the medicines before you take them. If it doesn't look like what you usually take, ask why
- ✓ Ask the hospital staff to go over each medicine with you and your support person when you are ready to go home
- ✓ Update your medicine list from home if any prescriptions change or if new medicines are added

### DO NOT:

- ✗ Let the nurse give you medicine without checking your hospital ID bracelet every time

## Be smart. Be safe... at medical appointments.

### DO:

- ✓ Take your medicine list to every medical appointment
- ✓ Ask your doctor about your medicines so you can understand:
  - What is the medicine for?
  - Is this medicine meant to replace any medicine I'm taking?
  - What are the brand and generic names?
  - How am I supposed to take it (what time of day) and for how long?
  - What side effects to watch for? What do I do if they occur?
  - Is this medicine safe to take with other medicines or dietary supplements I am taking?
  - What food, drink, or activities should I avoid while taking this medicine?
- ✓ If your doctor gives you samples, talk to your pharmacist about any side effects and interactions with your current medicines

## Be smart. Be safe... at the pharmacy.

### DO:

- ✓ Take new prescriptions to your established pharmacy
- ✓ If you use more than one pharmacy, share the list of all your medicines with the pharmacist
- ✓ Ask the pharmacist the name of the medicine and how you should take it
- ✓ Make sure any refill of the medicine is the same color, size, and shape. If there is any difference, ask why
- ✓ Ask your pharmacist if it is safe to take any new over the counter medicine with your current medicines
- ✓ Ask your pharmacist for a comprehensive review of your medicine list to help you monitor your blood pressure and/or blood sugar, assist with quitting tobacco/nicotine use, and to give recommended vaccinations
- ✓ Ask your pharmacist if you have **ANY** questions about your medicine