

Tips for Safe Medicine Use

- **Learn about your medicines.** Read medicine labels and package inserts. If you have difficulty reading the label, ask a friend, relative or pharmacist for help. If you have questions about the label directions or warnings, ask your doctor or other health care professional.
- **Talk to your health professionals** about your medical conditions, medicines you take and health concerns. The more they know, the more they can help you.
- **Tell your doctor about all the medicines you take**, including prescription and nonprescription medicines, as well as dietary supplements, vitamins and herbals. Also tell your doctor about any allergies you have (foods, other medicines, etc.).
- **Keep track of side effects** and let your doctor know immediately about any unexpected symptoms or changes in the way you feel.
- **Keep a record of the medicines you are taking.** If you are taking several different medicines, keeping a record of medication as you take it can help you use medicines properly and safely.
- **Use memory aids**, such as a calendar or pill box, to help you remember what to take and when.
- **Ask your pharmacist about patient records.** Many pharmacies now keep these records for you so that you'll be able to keep track of all medicines you are currently taking, as well as allergies and current medical conditions.
- **Make sure to go to all appointments** for monitoring tests done by your doctor or at a laboratory.
- **Go through your medicine cabinet** at least once a year to get rid of old or expired medicines. If small children or pets are in your home, it is best to throw away old medicines and dietary supplements in the toilet or sink rather than the trash can.
- **Have all your medicines reviewed** by your doctor at least once a year. Don't forget to include any over-the-counter medicines you take, as well as vitamins, dietary supplements and herbals. Write them down so you won't forget to mention any.
- **Questions? Ask a health professional.** If you do not understand information on the medicine label, ask your doctor, pharmacist or other health care professional.