

Women and Medicines: What You Need to Know

Read this card to learn about:

- How medicines can work differently in women and men.
- What you can do to help your medicines work best for you.

Be aware of how your medicines—both prescription and non-prescription medicines—affect your body. Discuss any questions or symptoms you may have with your pharmacist or provider. Work together to keep your medicine safe and effective.

- Women's bodies are different from men's. This affects the way chemicals are processed in the body.
- Hormones can affect how medicines work in women's bodies. For example, medication levels vary at different times of the menstrual cycle.
- Pregnant women need to consult their health care provider before taking any medicine to avoid risks to the fetus.
- As women age, their bodies process medicines differently, including the same medicines they used at younger ages.

Use the checklist on the back of this page to make sure your medicine works for you.

For more information:

Call 1-800-358-9295 for a free copy of *It's Your Health: Use Your Medication Safely* (AHRQ Pub. No. 05-R021) or contact

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Tips for Safe Medicine Use

Tell your health care provider—

- ✓ About allergies or bad reactions to medicines.
- ✓ If you are pregnant or plan to get pregnant soon.

Ask about your medicines—

- ✓ What are they used for?
- ✓ Are there any side effects you should watch for?
- ✓ Are they safe to take with your other medicines and supplements?
- ✓ What is the correct way to take them—whole, crushed, with food, with water, at the same time every day?
- ✓ Should you drive while taking this medicine?
- ✓ Are there certain foods or drinks you should avoid while using this medicine?

Make a list of your medicines, including non-prescription medicines and supplements.

- ✓ Keep the list current.
- ✓ Show it to your doctor and pharmacist at every visit.

Try to get all your medicines at the same pharmacy and ask your pharmacist to be sure they are safe if you take them together.

Tell your provider or pharmacist if:

- ✓ There's a change in how your medicines are working.
- ✓ Your medicines seem to work differently during different parts of your cycle.

If you need surgery or a procedure, ask if you should stop taking medicines beforehand.

Be informed. Learn about the medicines you are taking.

- ✓ Carefully read the printed information that comes with your medicine.
- ✓ Use a reliable book and Internet sources such as Medline Plus.

The brochure *Your Medicine: Play It Safe* (AHRQ Pub. No. 03-0019) has more information on taking medicines safely and a record form to keep track of your medicines.