

# Using Medicines Wisely

Today we have many medicines to choose from. Medicine can help you, but no drug is totally safe. There are things you can do to lower your chances of having problems and make sure your medicine works the best it can.

## Ask questions

- Why am I using this medicine?
- How long should I use it?
- When should I start to feel better?
- What problems should I watch for?
- What should I do if I have problems or side effects?
- When should I use this medicine?
- Should I take it on an empty stomach or with food?
- Is it safe to drink alcohol with it?
- What should I do if I forget to use it?

## Know the medicine

- What is the brand name? Does the drug have any other names?
- What does the drug look like? Look at the color, shape, and package. If it looks different next time, ask why. It could be the wrong medicine.

## Read the label

- Find out what is in the drug. Do not use the medicine if you are allergic to anything in it. Ask your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist about changing your medicine.
- Don't use two drugs with the same or similar ingredients.
- Don't use two drugs for the same problem unless your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist suggests it.
- Read the warnings carefully.

## Follow directions

- Do not skip taking your medicines.
- Don't take more than the suggested dose.
- Do not share medicines.
- Do not take medicine in the dark. It's too easy to make a mistake.

## Keep a list of all the medicines you use

- List all of your prescription medicines.
- List any over-the-counter medicines you use.
- List any vitamins, minerals, herbs, amino acids, and other products you use.
- Carry the list with you to show your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist.



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## How do you feel?

- If you are not feeling better, or start to feel worse, call your doctor or clinic. You might need a different medicine or a different dose.

For a free copy of a brochure with a place to list your medicines, call 1-888-878-3256.

**FDA Office of Women's Health** <http://www.fda.gov/womens>

## To Learn More:

### **Food and Drug Administration (FDA)**

<http://www.fda.gov>

Phone: 1-888-INFO-FDA (1-888-463-6332)