

# AVOIDING MEDICATION ERRORS

More than 1.5 million Americans are injured and 7,000 die by medication mistakes each year. Medication administration is a complex process, which means errors can happen at any step. Here are some things you can do to help prevent them:

1

## BRING ALL MEDICINES AND SUPPLEMENTS TO ALL DOCTOR VISITS.

Show your doctor any and all medicines, herbs, vitamins and supplements you are currently taking. Ask your doctor to update your medical records with the information.

2

## LET YOUR DOCTOR KNOW ABOUT ANY ALLERGIES, SIDE EFFECTS OR ADVERSE REACTIONS YOU'VE HAD TO MEDICINES YOU HAVE TAKEN OR ARE TAKING.

This helps your doctor avoid prescribing you a medicine that could harm you.

3

## IF YOUR DOCTOR WRITES YOU A PRESCRIPTION, MAKE SURE YOU CAN READ IT.

If you can't read your doctor's handwriting, there's a good chance your pharmacist can't either.

4

## BE AN ACTIVE PARTICIPANT IN YOUR HEALTHCARE AND TALK TO YOUR DOCTOR!

You should be part of every decision about your health care. Research shows that patients who are more involved with their care tend to get better results. Here are some useful questions to ask about new medications:

- What is this medicine for?
- How do I take it and for how long?
- What side effects are likely? What should I do if I experience any?
- Is this medicine safe to take with the other medicines and supplements I'm already taking?
- Should I avoid certain foods, drinks or activities while taking this medicine?

5

## YOUR PHARMACIST IS A VALUABLE RESOURCE. ASK QUESTIONS!

Pharmacists do more than fill prescriptions. They also provide important patient education and counseling when it comes to new medications. Feel free to ask questions like:

- Is this the medicine my doctor prescribed?
- Can you verify the dosage and frequency? For example, does "four times daily" mean around the clock or just while I'm awake?
- How do I measure liquid medicine? Do I need a marked syringe?

Sources: Institute of Medicine, Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, American Nurse Today, The Austin Diagnostic Clinic