

Use Medicine Safely



When you don't feel well, medicines can help you get better. But they can hurt you if you don't take them according to instructions from your doctor or pharmacist. Before using any medicine, read the label!

There are two kinds of medicine:

Over-the-Counter (OTC) Medicine-Medicine you can buy without a doctor's prescription.

Prescription Medicine-Your doctor writes a prescription that tells the pharmacist what you need. You pick up the medicine at the drug counter.

Your doctor or pharmacist can help you take medicine safely. Medicine labels may be hard to read. Make sure you ask questions. Taking more than one medicine without telling the doctor might hurt you.

When you talk to your doctor and pharmacist:

- tell them which medicines you are taking now
- tell your doctor if you have ever had problems with medicine
- tell your doctor about **everything** you are taking. This includes vitamins and supplements. It also includes homemade or traditional remedies made with herbs, plants, or other things.
- make a list of your medicines to show your doctor, or bring your medicine with you

Protect yourself and your baby. Medicine may hurt your baby. Tell the doctor or pharmacist if you are pregnant. Tell the doctor or pharmacist if you are nursing a baby.

Before you take **any** kind of medicine, make sure you know:

- What it is.
- Why you should take it.
- If it could make you feel sleepy or cause some other problem for you.
- When to take it.

- How much to take.
- How long to take it.
- You also need to know what you should **not** have while taking your medicine.

Some foods and drinks can make medicine work too fast. Some can make it work too slow—or not at all. Smoking cigarettes also can change the way your medicines work. Drinking alcohol when you are taking some medicines can be **very** dangerous. Some medicines can cause problems even if you take them the right way. Call your doctor or pharmacist if you think your medicine is making you feel worse. At home, see if the medicine looks normal. If it doesn't, don't use it! Take it back to the store.



Remember : Many people believe that if a doctor doesn't suggest a medicine for a problem, then they aren't getting what they paid for. But this is not true. Taking medicine when it is not needed is not just bad

for your health, but can be dangerous and is a waste of money. If you don't get a prescription, it just means you have a condition that does not require medicine. For example, viruses cause colds. Antibiotics are not effective against viruses. Rest and fluids are the best treatment for a cold.

Here are three safety ideas:

1. When you buy medicine, make sure no one has already opened it. At the store, check to see if the package was opened. If it was, tell a person working in the store.
2. **Never ever** take someone else's prescription medicine.
3. Keep **all** medicines away from children. A locked cabinet is best.

Do you have questions about your medicine? Call 1-888-INFO-FDA (1-888-463-6332). Or, on the World Wide Web at www.fda.gov.

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