

Tips to Avoid Medication Errors

1. Know your medicine. Know the names of the medications you take, what the product looks like, why you take them, and how the product might make you feel. Before you take your medication, double-check the label and the contents. If your medication looks different or makes you feel different, talk to your pharmacist.
2. Know your pharmacist. Your pharmacist is your medication expert, your partner in helping make your medication work. Ask your pharmacist to review each medication with you -- including showing you the tablets or capsules and reviewing important information about the product. Research shows patients are more likely to ask questions of their pharmacist -- an important step to preventing errors -- if they know their pharmacist's name.
3. Use ONE pharmacy. Using the same pharmacy to purchase all of your prescription and over-the-counter medications is an important protection. Your pharmacist is then able to monitor exactly which medications you are taking and check on possible harmful side effects and or drug interactions.
4. If you take multiple medications ask the doctor to write what each one is for in the directions. Your pharmacist can then place the reason on the label.
5. Make sure you can read your prescription. When you leave your doctor's office with your prescriptions, make sure you can read them. If they are illegible, ask your doctor to re-write them. Poor handwriting is a major contributor to medication errors.
6. Ask the doctor to write out directions for samples they give you. Make sure the name of the drug is included on the direction sheet and you can read the sheet. If not ask the doctor to rewrite them.
7. Read the label and follow the directions. Medications are powerful, that's why they work. But they can cause harm as well, particularly if they are not used correctly. Follow the directions on the label, but be sure to call your pharmacist and your doctor if you notice any unusual symptoms.

APhA and the nation's pharmacists are very concerned about medication errors. The profession of pharmacy strives for an error-free environment. Pharmacists work closely with patients, physicians, and other health care professionals to improve medication use and advance patient care.