

EMPOWERED PATIENT®

"Ten Things Patients Should Know" Series

WAYS PATIENTS CAN HELP PREVENT MEDICATION ERRORS

1. **BE ABLE TO READ PRESCRIPTIONS:** You should be able to read the writing on prescriptions. If you cannot, ask the provider to write the name down for you using block printing.
2. **ASK FOR THE BRAND NAME AND THE GENERIC NAME:** Write down both names of the drug to assist in verifying the medication at the pharmacy.
3. **KNOW WHAT THE PRESCRIPTION IS FOR:** Why are you being prescribed this medication? What condition is it treating?
4. **UNDERSTAND HOW TO TAKE THE MEDICATION:** Be sure you understand all instructions for taking medications - the dose, how often it is taken, the correct time of day to take the drug and how long you will take it.
5. **ASK WHAT TO DO IF YOU MISS A DOSE:** Do not "double up" on the next dose. Call your provider and ask for advice.
6. **CHECK THE BAG AND THE LABEL AT THE PHARMACY:** Check the names on the bag and on the bottle to be sure it is the right patient, the right medication and the right dose.
7. **ASK ABOUT SIDE EFFECTS OR FOODS TO AVOID:** Read the computer printouts that come with the prescription and ask what to do if you experience side effects. Ask if you need to avoid any foods, caffeine or herbal medications.
8. **FILL YOUR PRESCRIPTIONS AT THE SAME PHARMACY:** Use the same pharmacy or the same chain of pharmacies so their computer software will flag drug interactions.
9. **KEEP A PERSONAL MEDICATION RECORD:** Keep an updated written list of all your medications and the prescribing provider. Include over-the-counter medications, vitamins and other natural supplements.
10. **RESEARCH YOUR MEDICATIONS:** Check for drug interactions at <http://healthtools.aarp.org/drug-interactions> and use a drug information guide or the Internet to read about side effects and usual dosages.