

# SpeakUP™

Medicine mistakes happen every day—at the doctor's office or hospital, even at home. You can get the wrong medicine. Or, you can be given the wrong amount of medicine. This brochure has questions and answers to help prevent mistakes with your medicines.

**Help avoid mistakes with your medicines**

**NY Eye & Ear Infirmary**

Continuum Health Partners, Inc.

**Provided as a community service by:**

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The New York Eye and Ear Infirmary is a member of Continuum Health Partners, Inc., and an affiliated teaching hospital of New York Medical College.

09/09

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Medication\* (include amount you take and how often or what time of day)

vitamins

herbs, diet supplements, natural remedies

alcohol, recreational drugs

**My Medicine List**

## Who is responsible for your medicines?

A lot of people—including you!

- Doctors check all of your medicines to make sure they are OK to take together. They will also check your vitamins, herbs, diet supplements or natural remedies.
- Pharmacists will check your new medicines to see if there are other medicines, foods or drinks you should not take with your new medicines. This helps to avoid a bad reaction.
- Nurses and other caregivers may prepare medicines or give them to you.
- You need to give your doctors, pharmacists and other caregivers a list of your medicines. This list should have your

prescription medicines  
over-the-counter medicines (for example, aspirin)  
vitamins  
herbs  
diet supplements  
natural remedies  
amount of alcohol you drink each day or week  
recreational drugs

This brochure has a wallet card for your list of medicines.

## What should you know about your medicines?

- Make sure you can read the handwriting on the prescription. If you can't read it, the pharmacist may not be able to read it either. You can ask to have the prescription printed.
- Read the label. Make sure it has your name on it and the right medicine name.
- Make sure that you understand all of the instructions for your medicines.
- If you have doubts about a medicine, ask your doctor, pharmacist or caregiver about it.

## What if you forget the instructions for taking a medicine or are not sure about taking it?

Call your doctor or pharmacist. Don't be afraid to ask questions about any of your medicines.

## What can you do at the hospital or clinic to help avoid mistakes with your medicines?

- Make sure your doctors, nurses and other caregivers check your wristband and ask your name before giving you medicine. Some patients get a medicine that was supposed to go to another patient.
- Don't be afraid to tell a caregiver if you think you are about to get the wrong medicine.
- Know what time you should get a medicine. If you don't get it then, speak up.
- Tell your caregiver if you don't feel well after taking a medicine. Ask for help immediately if you think you are having a side effect or reaction.
- You may be given IV (intravenous) fluids. Read the bag to find out what is in it. Ask the caregiver how long it should take for the liquid to run out. Tell the caregiver if it's dripping too fast or too slow.
- Get a list of your medicines—including your new ones. Read the list carefully. Make sure it lists everything you are taking. If you're not well enough to do this, ask a friend or relative to help.

## Questions to ask your doctor or pharmacist

- How will this new medicine help you?
- Are there other names for this medicine? For example, does it have a brand or generic name?
- Is there any written information about the medicine?
- Can you take this medicine with your allergy? Remind your doctor about your allergies and reactions you have had to medicines.

- Is it safe to take this medicine with your other medicines? Is it safe to take it with your vitamins, herbs and supplements?
- Are there any side effects of the medicine? For example, upset stomach. Who can you call if you have side effects or a bad reaction? Can they be reached 24 hours a day, seven days a week?
- Are there specific instructions for your medicines? For example, are there any foods or drinks you should avoid while taking it?
- Can you stop taking the medicine as soon as you feel better? Or do you need to take it until it's gone?
- Do you need to swallow or chew the medicine? Can you cut or crush it if you need to?
- Is it safe to drink alcohol with the medicine?

[www.jointcommission.org](http://www.jointcommission.org)

## My Medicine List

It's important to include this information in case of an emergency. Carry this card with you. Share it with your pharmacist, doctor and other caregivers.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Blood Type \_\_\_\_\_

Allergies \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency Contact \_\_\_\_\_

List all of your

prescription medicines

over-the-counter medicines (for example, aspirin)

vitamins

herbs

diet supplements

natural remedies

amount of alcohol you drink each day or week

recreational drugs

prescription \_\_\_\_\_

over-the-counter (for example, aspirin) \_\_\_\_\_