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SP717-How to Avoid Medication Errors

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How to Avoid Medication Errors

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Did You Know That Taking Medications Is As Easy as PIE?

If you know the purpose of each medication, understand the instructions for use and dosage and know the outcomes (effects) to expect, then taking your medication can be as easy as **PIE**.

Purpose and name of the medication.
Instructions for use and dosage:
How many times a day?
Time of day?
With food or without food?
How long to take it?
What if I miss a dose?
Should I avoid alcohol, sunlight, certain foods, etc.?

Effects of the drug, both positive and

negative.

We all take medications at one time or another. Many of us take medications daily for a chronic condition. On average, Tennesseans use between 15 and 17 prescriptions per person per year. In addition, people also take over-the-counter (OTC) medications and supplements and herbals. However, nearly half of Americans do not take their medications as directed or check their prescriptions to make sure they have the right medications. Medication errors can cause you unnecessary discomfort or waste your money. At the very worst, these errors can even be life-threatening.

What is a medication error?

A medication error is any preventable event that may cause or lead to inappropriate medication use or physical harm. A medication error can occur in ways that you have no control. But you

can prevent some kinds of medication errors by taking an active role in your medical care. You need to understand your medications and take more responsibility for monitoring them. Check $(\ensuremath{\boxtimes})$ the ways you plan to try to avoid medication errors.

At Your Doctor's Office or Outpatient Clinic

\square Take your medication list with you every time you g	o to your doc-
tor's office, especially if you see more than one doct	or. Each doctor
must know about all the medications other doctors	have prescribed
for you.	
☐ Ask your doctor to explain what is written on every	prescription,
including the drug name and how often you should	take it. Then
when you pick up a prescription at the pharmacy, yo	ou can double-
check the information on the label.	
\square Tell your doctor you want the purpose of the medica	ition written or
the prescription. Many drug names look alike when	
knowing a drug's purpose helps you and your phari	nacist double-
check the prescription.	
☐ If your doctor gives you samples, make sure that he	or she checks
them to be sure they won't interact with your other	
Pharmacies have computers that check for drug inte	ractions and
allergies. However, if your doctor gives you samples	, this important
check may be missed.	, 1
\square Make sure you know the PIE for each drug you are \square	prescribed.
(See box above.)	•

☐ Ask your doctor for educational material about your med You can also look up the specific medication on the Inte able source is the National Institutes of Health's Web site medications and supplements at www.nlm.nih.gov/mediatruginformation.html .	rnet. A reli- on	
At Your Pharmacy		
☐ Make sure your pharmacist has an up-to-date list of all th	e medica-	
tions you are taking.		
☐ Make sure the name of the drug (brand or generic) and t tions for use received at the pharmacy are the same as the down by your doctor.		
☐ Know that you have the right to talk to your pharmacist is	if you have	
any questions. You can ask the pharmacist to explain how to proper-		
ly take the drug, the side effects of the drug, and what		
to do if you experience side effects.	A 14	
\Box If the medication does not look the same as last time,	A handout providing helpful steps to avoiding	
ask your pharmacist about it.	medication errors is	
\square Ask for written information about the medication.	available at the National	
	Patient Information and	
At Home	Education Web site at www.	
☐ Maintain a list of the prescription drugs, over-the-	talkaboutrx.org/documents/	
counter drugs and other products, such as vitamins	make_notes_bw.pdf. Visit the	
and minerals, dietary supplements and herbals that	UT Extension Health Progran	
you take. Use the UT Med Minder card to keep a re-	Be MedWise Tennessee Web	
cord of your medications. You can get this wallet-sized	site for more information	
card from your county UT Extension office or you can	about medications at	
print a copy from the UT Extension Health Program,	<u>bemedwisetn.tennessee.edu</u> .	
Be MedWise Tennessee Web site at		
<u>bemedwisetn.tennessee.edu</u> . ☐ Carry this list with you and have it reviewed every time you visit a		
health care provider.		
☐ Keep this list of medications up-to-date.		
☐ If you have a question about your medications, write it down so you		
can remember to ask your doctor or pharmacist.		
☐ If you suspect a medication error, call the Tennessee Poison Center		
at 1-800-222-1222 for immediate first aid and treatment advice. The		
medical hotline is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. All calls		
are free of charge. Learn more about the poison center at its Web		
site, www.tnpoisoncenter.org.		
☐ Never take someone else's medication. You don't know if it will in-		
teract with your medications, the dose may be wrong for you, or you		
may be allergic to it.		

 □ When taking liquid medication, use the cup or measuring device that came with it. Dosing errors can happen if you use a different cup or household measuring spoons, which are not very accurate. □ Turn on lights, and if needed, put on your glasses to take your medication(s). If you can't see what you are taking, you may take the wrong thing. Call the Tennessee Poison Center if you suspect you have taken the wrong medication. □ If your doctor has scheduled you for surgery, ask whether there are medications – especially prescription antibiotics – that you should take or stop taking before surgery.
At the Hospital
 □ Take your medication list or your medications in their original containers with you and have the health care provider review the medications you are taking. □ Ask the doctor or nurse what drugs you are being given. □ Do not take a drug without being told its purpose. □ Tell someone if you think you are getting the wrong medication. □ Exercise your right to have a friend or family member present whenever you are receiving medication if you are unable to monitor the process yourself. □ Prior to being released from the hospital, ask for a list of the medications that you should be taking at home, and make sure you know the PIE for each medication you are to take at home. Adapted from Preventing Medication Errors, Institute of Medicine, Report Brief, July 2006. http://www.iom.edu/Object.File/Master/35/943/medication%20errors%20new.pdf.
For more information on medications and health, contact your county UT Extension office:
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Health Literacy