



U.S. Pharmacopeia
The Standard of QualitySM

TEN WAYS CONSUMERS CAN HELP ENSURE THAT MEDICATION ERRORS ARE AVOIDED

- 1. Talk with your doctor about your prescription**
As the practitioner gives you your prescription, ask what drug is being prescribed and in what strength. Be sure the instructions to use the medication are clearly explained.
- 2. Make sure you can read the prescription you receive from your prescriber**
If you can't read the prescription, ask for the name of the medicine to be printed out. If you can't read directions for taking the medication, ask for printed instructions.
- 3. Understand what illness the drug is treating**
When you receive a prescription, make sure you know what illness the prescribed drug is to treat and the *exact* way you should take the medication.
- 4. Check the label when you get your prescription**
When you receive the filled prescription from your pharmacist, check the prescription label. Is the medication what your practitioner prescribed? Are the directions consistent with what the prescriber told you?
- 5. Ask your pharmacist to explain the drug and how it works**
As you receive the product, ask the pharmacist to discuss the nature of the product, how it works, possible side effects, and how to most effectively take the prescription.
- 6. Ask your pharmacist for printed information about your prescription**
Ask for a patient information brochure about the medicine and how to use it.
- 7. When you get a refill, make sure it is the same drug**
When obtaining a refill, make sure it is the same color, shape, size and dosage as your original prescription. An exception maybe when you receive a generic product. In this case, discuss and ensure with your pharmacist that the product you are receiving contains the same medicine, at the same strength.
- 8. Keep records of your medications**
Keep a record of the names of all your medicines and what they look like. Should you receive a medication that is a different shape, size, or color, update the list when refilled.
- 9. Purchase a drug information guide**
Buy a drug information resource book, or locate a guide on the Internet. In either case, make sure that the resource contains *color* pictures of the medications.
- 10. If you are sight impaired, ask for assistance from your pharmacist**
If you have trouble with your eyesight, ask the pharmacist to use different sizes or types of containers to help you differentiate your medicines. Some pharmacists will prepare special packages for patients who take a number of different medications at specific times throughout the day.

USP was established in 1820 to ensure that consumers receive medicines of the highest possible quality, strength and purity in the United States. Today's Pharmacopeia provides standards for more than 3,700 drugs and dosage forms for medicines and dietary supplements. USP's standards-setting role has also grown to include development of authoritative information on the use of medicines and dietary supplements as well as reporting programs regarding product problems and medication errors, in both the human and veterinary fields, which seek to reduce such occurrences and benefit consumers nationwide.

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