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.

### My Medicine List

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Medication</th>
<th>Amount taken per dose</th>
<th>How often or what time of day</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamins</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herbs, diet supplements, natural remedies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medication Mistakes reprint 4/1/08 9:38 AM Page 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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.

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