

*You, your doctor, and your pharmacist are a team, working together to maximize the benefits of your medication while minimizing the risks.*

## **At the Doctor's Office or Ambulatory Surgical Center**

Before you leave your doctor's office with a new or renewed prescription, make sure you or your caregiver know:

- 1. What is this medication?** What is its name? What does it look like?
- 2. What is the dosage?**
- 3. How often should I take this medication?** What should I do if I miss a dose?
- 4. Are there any side effects?** What should I do if I experience them?
- 5. Should I avoid any foods or other medications while taking this prescription?** Should I stay out of the sun while taking this medication?
- 6. What is the proper way to store this medication?**

**Make sure you can read the prescription and instructions.**

Write down the answers to these questions and ask if there are printed instructions available for you to take home.

## **Additional Resources**

American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons  
[www.aaos.org](http://www.aaos.org)

Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality  
[www.ahrq.gov/consumer/safemeds/safemeds.htm](http://www.ahrq.gov/consumer/safemeds/safemeds.htm)

American Pharmaceutical Association  
[www.pharmacyandyou.org](http://www.pharmacyandyou.org)

American Society of Health-System Pharmacists  
[www.safemedication.com](http://www.safemedication.com)

National Council on Patient Information and Education (NCPPIE)  
[www.talkaboutrx.org](http://www.talkaboutrx.org)

National Patient Safety Foundation  
[www.npsf.org/download/PharmacySafety.pdf](http://www.npsf.org/download/PharmacySafety.pdf)

# **SAFE MEDICATION PRACTICES**



*Patient Tools for the Safe Use of Prescription Medication*



American Academy of  
Orthopaedic Surgeons®

**AAOS**

American Association of  
Orthopaedic Surgeons®

*It is important that you tell your doctors about all the medications you are taking, including vitamins, herbal supplements, and over-the-counter medicines.*

*When you are hospitalized, it is important to take only the medications given to you by the staff. Tell them about all the medications you take.*

*If you have questions about your medications, your pharmacist can be very helpful. Ask for printed information about your medications.*

## At Home

**Keep a list of all the medicines you take**, including name of the medication, dosage, how often you take it, and the name of the physician who prescribed the medicine. The list below is an example of the kind of record you can keep:

Mary Jones Medication List			
Aspirin	81 mg	once a day	Dr. Jane Smith
Lasix	20 mg	twice a day	Dr. Dave Johnson
Ginkgo Biloba	2 tablets	once a day	over-the-counter

**Share this list with each physician that treats you.** Knowing what medications you take helps your physician select the best treatment for you and prevents interactions.

**Make sure you take your medications as directed.** Follow the instructions that your doctor and pharmacist give you. Know what to do if you miss a dose.

**Store your medications properly.** Some medicines need to be refrigerated. Always store them in their original containers and keep them out of the reach of children.

## At the Hospital or in the Emergency Room

When you are admitted to the hospital you need to **let the nurses and doctors know what medications you are taking.**

It is also very important that you not take your own medications unless given to you by the staff.

**When a new medication is prescribed, ask the same questions that you would at the doctor's office.** It is okay to ask what a new medication is for, how it will make you feel, and whether you will have any side effects.

**Ask questions if something does not seem right.** If you think the pill you are given should be blue, but it is yellow, ask the nurse. They should be able to answer your questions.

**When you are being discharged, check to see if any of your prescriptions have changed.** Ask for printed instructions and information about the new medications.

**Before you leave, make sure you or your caregiver understand what medications to take, how to take them, and when to take them.**

## At the Pharmacy

**Use the same pharmacy to fill all your prescriptions.**

**Share your medication list with your pharmacist.** He or she can help you avoid dangerous interactions.

Your pharmacist is a good resource and can answer many of your questions about your medicines.

**Ask for printed material about your medications,** including foods and other medications to avoid when taking a new medicine.

**Tell your pharmacist about any allergies you have and any reactions you have had to medication.**

**Check your medication before you leave the pharmacy.** Make sure you have the right medication and understand the dosage.

**If you have concerns about being able to follow a new medication routine, ask for help.** Pharmacies also have many products that can help you organize your medications and take them at the correct time.