



Practice Medication Safety

Eight Ways to Prevent Medication Errors

Did You Know . . .

- Medication errors are a common occurrence and continue to be a problem. Approximately 7,000 deaths occur each year and medication errors occur in just about 1 of every 5 doses given in hospitals.¹
- The FDA states that 1.3 million people are injured each year due to medication errors.²
- Medical errors can occur in clinics, doctors' offices, hospitals, nursing homes, pharmacies, and members' homes.
- Errors happen when doctors and their members have problems communicating.

What Can You Do?

Be involved in your health care!

1. The single most important way you can help prevent errors is to be an active member of your health care team. People who are more involved with their care tend to get better results.
2. Make sure that all of your doctors know about every medication you are taking. This includes prescription and over-the-counter medicines and dietary supplements such as vitamins and herbs.
3. At least once a year, take all of your medicines and supplements with you to your doctor's office. "Brown bagging" your medicines can help you and your doctor talk about them and find out if there are any problems. It can also help your doctor keep your records up to date, which can help you get better care.
4. Make sure your doctors know about any allergies and adverse reactions you have had to medicines in the past. This can help you avoid getting a medicine that can harm you.
5. When your doctor writes you a prescription, make sure you can read it. If you can't read your doctor's handwriting, your pharmacist might not be able to either.
6. Ask for information about your medicines in terms you can understand – when your medicines are prescribed and when you receive them. Ask questions like:
 - What is the medicine for?
 - How am I supposed to take it, and for how long?
 - What side effects are likely? What do I do if they occur?
 - Is this medicine safe to take with other medicines or dietary supplements I am taking?
 - What food, drink, or activities should I avoid while taking this medicine?
7. When you pick up your medicine from the pharmacy, check to see that it is the medicine and the dosage that your doctor prescribed. A study by the Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Allied Health Sciences found that 88% of medicine errors involved the wrong drug or the wrong dose.
8. If you have any questions about the directions on your medicine labels, ask. Medicine labels can be hard to understand. For example, ask if "four doses daily" means taking a dose every 6 hours around the clock or just during regular waking hours.
9. Ask for written information about the side effects your medicine could cause. If you know what might happen, you will be better prepared if it does, or if something unexpected happens instead. That way, you can report the problem right away and get help before it gets worse.

Resources Are Available

Additional information, self-help tools and other resources are available online at www.MagellanHealth.com. Or call us for more information, help and support at **800-424-5988**. Counselors are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to provide confidential assistance at no cost to you.