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# Taking Your Medicine Safely

## Helpful Information for Seniors

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## 1. CHECK THE LABEL

- Before taking your medicine, check the label to be sure you have the correct bottle.  
**Do not take medicine in the dark;** it's easy to make a mistake when you can't see what you're taking
- Always follow the label directions carefully for over-the-counter medicines. For prescription medicines, follow the directions given by your doctor. If you are not sure about how to take your medicine, ask your doctor or pharmacist before you take anything
- Take a close look at the medicines in your home. Check the expiration date on each bottle, and throw away any that are out of date. Outdated medicines can harm you. Check with your pharmacist if you can't decide whether the medicine is outdated.
- If you have problems reading the print on the label, ask your pharmacist for a large-print label and bigger bottle.

**YOUR PHARMACY**      **555-1234**

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No. 121212

For: Jane Customer

#100 Phenytoin 100mg capsules

**TAKE ONE CAPSULE THREE TIMES A DAY** for seizure control

Dr. Physician

Expires 5/5/05

## 2. TALK TO YOUR DOCTOR, NURSE, OR PHARMACIST

- Be sure to have all prescriptions explained to you when you pick up the prescription at the pharmacy. Let your pharmacist know what over-the-counter medicines you use because they may interact with prescription medicines you're taking.
- Some medicines must not be mixed with alcohol. When you get a new prescription, talk to your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist about drinking **any** type of alcohol, including wine and beer.
- Some medicines have to be taken with certain foods or before, during, or after meals. Some are not as effective when combined with certain foods. Check with your doctor, nurse or pharmacist for any special instructions about food and your medicines.
- If you forget to take your medicine, call your doctor. **Never take a larger dose without your doctor's permission**, even if you've missed a dose.
- If you have any new symptoms or questions after starting a new medicine, talk to your doctor or nurse right away.



### 3. USE MEDICATION REMINDERS

- List all the medicines you are currently taking on a **Medicine Passport**. It is designed to help you and your doctor(s), nurse, and pharmacist keep track of all your prescription and over-the-counter medicine. **It's very important that each doctor you see (including your eye doctor and dentist) knows about all of the medicines you are taking.** Bring your **Medicine Passport** to the doctor and pharmacist on every visit.
- Write your medicine schedule on a **Medicine Calendar**. Your doctor, nurse or pharmacist can help you fill it out. The calendar will help you keep track of when you should take each medicine. Post the Medicine Calendar in your bathroom, on your refrigerator, or any place that is easy to see.
- Some people find pill dispensers bought from a pharmacy helpful in organizing medicines. Many pharmacists don't like dispensers because they expose medicines to light and moisture and because they separate pills from their original containers and labels. Be sure to talk to your pharmacist or nurse about whether or not to use one. Pill dispensers should never be left where young children can reach them.
- If there are no children in your home, you may find it helpful to put your day's medicine out the night before.

MEDICINE CALENDAR				
	Morning	Afternoon	Evening	Bedtime
<b>SUN:</b>	<i>Multi-vitamin</i>	<i>Norvasc</i>	<i>Alleve</i>	<i>Tums</i>
<b>MON:</b>	<i>Celebrex</i>			<i>Calcium</i>

## 4. PROTECT CHILDREN VISITING YOUR HOME



- Store all medicines in their child-safe containers. Put them in a cabinet that is out of reach or a closet with a secure lock, unless they need to be refrigerated. **Remember, small children can easily climb to reach a cabinet above the sink and they can climb quickly.**
- Always keep the Poison Center Hotline number on or near your phones: 1-800-222-1222. Call the Poison Center right away if you suspect a poisoning.



## OTHER HELPFUL INFORMATION:

- **NEVER** share medicine. Medicine prescribed for one person may be harmful if taken by others, even if their symptoms are similar.
- Try to get all your medicine from the same pharmacy. If a record of all your prescriptions is in one store, it will be easier for the pharmacist to give you advice or answer your questions.
- Do not store medicine a bathroom used for bathing or showering. Dampness can make the medicine deteriorate.
- If you **DON'T** have young children around, you may want to ask your pharmacist to put your medicine in easy-open containers.

Call the Regional Center for Poison Control and Prevention Serving Massachusetts and Rhode Island if:

- You have questions about poison-proofing your for young children
- You want Poison Hotline stickers for your phones
- You want information about specific poisons in the home

**For emergency information if you suspect someone has been poisoned, call the toll free hotline, 24 hours per day, at 1-800-222-1222**

**TTY/TDD: 1-888-244-5313**

**Regional Center for Poison Control and Prevention  
Serving Massachusetts and Rhode Island**

Children's Hospital, Boston  
300 Longwood Avenue, IC Smith Bldg.  
Boston, MA 02115

Administrative Office: 617-355-6909  
Administrative Fax: 617-730-0521



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