

# Taking Medicines Safely

Medicines are often part of treatment for illness or injury. There are many medicines. Your doctor will work with you to find the best medicine for you. Taking medicine is not without some risk for side effects. Follow the tips below for taking medicines safely.

- Keep a list of your medicines with you. Include prescription and over the counter medicines, herbs, vitamins and any home remedies you use.
- Show this list to all doctors, pharmacists and dentists who are treating you.
- Take your medicine as ordered by your doctor. Do not change or stop taking any medicine until you talk to your doctor.
- Take your medicines at the same time each day.
- Tell your doctor if you are pregnant, breastfeeding or on a special diet.
- Get a refill at least one week before your medicine is gone.
- Throw away unused or expired medicines.
- Do not take any new herbal products or over the counter medicines without first checking with your doctor or pharmacist. These products may change the way your other medicines work.

## **New Medicine**

- Check if the medicine is covered by your insurance or if a generic medicine can be used.
- Use only one pharmacy so they have a record of all of your medicines. They can make sure that your medicines can be taken together safely.
- Ask your doctor or pharmacist the following questions:
  - How do I take this medicine?
  - How long do I take this medicine? Do I take it until I am better? Is this a medicine I need to take always to keep my problem under control?
  - What are the side effects and what do I do if they occur?
  - What do I do when I forget to take my medicine?
  - What do I do if I take an extra or too much medicine?

## **Storing Medicine**

- Keep all medicines in their containers unless you are using a pillbox.
- Store medicines in a cool, dry place.
- Keep bottles tightly capped and out of the reach of children.
- Do not give your medicines to anyone else.

**Call your doctor if you:**

- Are having side effects.
- Have questions or concerns.

**Write down this information:**

- What is the name of the medicine?
- Why do I take it?
- How much do I take?
- What times should I take it?

Use the form on the next page to write your medicines down and carry it in your wallet so you have it when you need it.

**Talk to your doctor, nurse or pharmacist if you have any questions about your medicines or how to take them.**

