

# Use Medicines Wisely

Avoid common medicine mistakes. Check the FDA website for more resources for women and their families.

- Get a record keeper to list your medicines.
- Download a booklet to help you talk to your doctor about your prescription medicines.
- Watch videos to learn other helpful tips.

[www.fda.gov/womenshealthsafemeds](http://www.fda.gov/womenshealthsafemeds)



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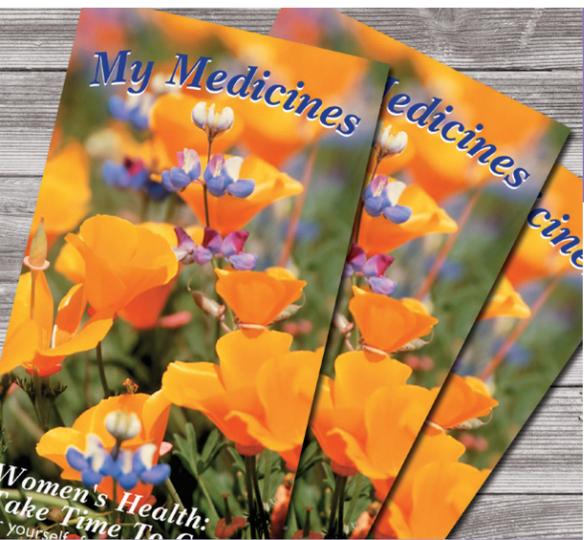
Medicines can treat health problems and help you live a healthier life. When used incorrectly, medicines can also cause serious health problems. Many of these problems can be prevented. Learn four (4) tips to avoid common medicine mistakes.

1. Ask questions.
2. Keep a list.
3. Follow directions.
4. Safely store and throw out medicines.

# 1. ASK QUESTIONS

Ask your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist to tell you the facts about each medicine you take.

- What is the name of the medicine?
- What is the active ingredient(s)?
- What is the medicine for?
- How much do I take and when should I take it?
- When does it expire?
- Are there any side effects or special warnings?
- What should I do if I start having side effects?
- Can I take it if I am pregnant or breastfeeding?
- What other medicines or foods should I avoid?



Get a free **My Medicines** brochure to keep track of your medicines.

# 2. KEEP A MEDICINE LIST

Write down the important facts about each medicine you take.

- List each prescription medicine.
- Include vitamins and over-the-counter medicines like aspirin and cold medicine.
- Keep the list with you all the time.
- Show it to your doctor, nurse, and pharmacist.



# 3. FOLLOW DIRECTIONS

Your medicine may not work if you don't follow the directions. Taking too much or too little can make you very sick.

## Use Medicines as Directed.

- Read the directions on the label and ask your healthcare provider how much you should take and when.
- Never skip taking your prescription medicine. Talk to your healthcare provider before you stop taking your medicines.

## Avoid Common Problems.

- Don't share medicines.
- Check the expiration date on your medicine. It may not be safe or work after it has expired.

# 4. SAFELY THROW OUT MEDICINES

Ask your doctor, nurse or pharmacist how you should get rid of unused medicines. Find out if you should:

- flush it down the toilet or sink.
- put it in a sealed plastic bag with coffee grounds or kitty litter and throw it in the trash.
- drop it off at a drug take-back program in your community.

Be sure to scratch off your name and personal information before you put empty pill bottles in the trash.

Make sure that children can't get to medicines including patches that you put in the trash.



## Lock It Up.

Keep your medicine locked in a safe place away from kids, teens, and other adults.