



Safe Use of Prescription Drugs

If you have ever had a problem with your medications, you are not alone. Medicine is prescribed to help you but it can hurt you if you don't take it correctly. Some of the most common problems with prescription drug use are:

- taking too much
- mixing medicines (even mixing medicines with vitamins and supplements).

Lots of people are seriously hurt each year because of taking a wrong medication or by taking the right medication in the wrong way. It is important that you know the risks and benefits of the medicine before you decide to take it.

Talk With Your Health-Care Provider

It is very important to share information about your medication use with your nurse, doctor, pharmacist, home-care workers and other health-care providers.

When you see your health-care providers, tell them about:

- Your prescription medicines.
- If you are taking any herbal



remedies or traditional medicines because these can sometimes mix with your prescriptions and create problems.

- Medicines you take that don't need a prescription such as Tylenol, cough medicines, and herbal medications.
- Vitamins and supplements.
- Allergies to medicines.

- If you are seeing more than one health-care provider or traditional healer.
- If you are pregnant, may become pregnant, or are nursing a baby.
- Any other illnesses you have (diabetes, high or low blood pressure).
- Any unusual reaction you may have had when a drug was prescribed before (including rash, stomach problems, diarrhea, dizziness, breathing problems, heart problems and so on).

Ask Your Health-Care Providers Questions

Each time you get a new prescription, you or a family member needs to ask about the medication. Ask questions such as:

- Why am I taking this medicine?
- What will it do for me?
- How will this new medication

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work with the other medications I'm taking?

- Does this new prescription mean that I should stop taking my other medicines?
- How should I take it?
- How often do I take it?
- Do I need to finish it, or can I stop when I feel better?
- Do I need follow-up tests?
- When should it start to work?
- What are the side effects?
- What should I do if I have a side effect?
- Do I need to avoid certain foods, drinks, and activities while taking it?

Steps for Safe Medication Use

- Take a list of questions with you to make sure you are asking all of the right questions. You can also make notes about the medication.
- When possible, use the same

health centre or pharmacy so that a record of your prescriptions is available each time you visit.

- Read and save the information that comes with your medicine.
- Tell your doctor right away if you think that you are having side effects.



- Never give your prescription medicine to anyone else.
- When you are unsure, always ask a professional.
- Keep in mind that if the label says not to take with alcohol, this includes products such as cough

syrups and liquid cold medication because they may contain alcohol.

Use All Tools Available to You

There are many products available that can help remind you to take your medicine on time and keep track of which ones you have taken. There are containers that you can fill with your pills for each day of the week and calendars that you can use to check off the medications you have already taken. Many pharmacies will package medications to help you remember.

Family members and friends can help make sure that you are safe and healthy. If you aren't sure if you will take your medicine on time, ask a family member or close friend to remind you, or ask them to go to the health centre with you to take notes and help you remember information about your medication.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Tips on safe medication use, questions to ask your health-care provider about your medication and your health, and advice for medical patients can be found in the Ajunnginiq Centre's resource **Are you Heading South for Medical Reasons? A Handbook for Inuit Patients and Escorts.**



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ajunnginiq centre

Telephone: 1-877-602-4445

E-mail: inuit@naho.ca

Web site: www.naho.ca/inuit/e/resources/

OTHER RESOURCES:

Tips on Safer Medication Use (guidebook). Canadian Pharmacists Association, www.pharmacists.ca/content/consumer_patient/resource_centre/working/pdf/SafeMedUse_30Apr07.pdf
Telephone: 1-800-917-9489

Knowledge is the Best Medicine (brochure). Canada's Research-Based Pharmaceutical Companies, www.canadapharma.org/Pubs/Knowledge/KIBMbro_e.html; Telephone: (613) 236-0455

Helping Aboriginal Communities Reduce Prescription Drug Abuse. National Indian and Inuit Community Health Representatives Organization. www.niichro.com; Telephone: (450) 632-0892