



## YOUR FRIENDS AND FAMILY CAN HELP BY:

- Going with you to the doctor. Ask them to take notes about your medicines and other parts of your treatment plan.
- Picking up your medicine at the pharmacy. Have them show the pharmacist your list of medicines, vitamins, and supplements. They should ask, "Will this new medicine work safely with the other medications?"
- Calling regularly to remind you to take your medicine on time. If you are having any problems, let them know.
- Keeping a record of what medicine you have taken so you won't take it twice.

## SAFETY TIPS

Follow these 5 tips to avoid medication errors:

- Follow the dosing instructions carefully when you take your medications.
- Do not chew, crush or break any capsules or tablets unless instructed by your doctor. Some medications are absorbed too quickly when chewed or crushed, which could have an effect similar to taking an overdose.
- Store your medications properly. The bathroom and the kitchen are probably the two worst places to store medicines because humidity, heat and light can all affect their potency and safety. Try a high shelf in your closet, where children cannot easily see or reach them.
- Never take medication prescribed for someone else and never offer your prescription medication to another person.
- Never take a medication after its expiration date. Some drugs lose potency when they get old, which can be extremely dangerous.

Connecticut Department of Consumer Protection

### Prescription Monitoring Program

165 Capitol Avenue, Room 145  
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(860) 713-6073 • [www.ct.gov/dcp](http://www.ct.gov/dcp)



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# Medication Safety: Who's At Risk & What You Can Do



## Learn More About Taking Medication Safely



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## TAKING PRESCRIPTIONS

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Have you ever had a problem with your medication? You are not alone. There is so much information to keep track of. For example, you may have asked yourself:

- When should I take my medication?
- Is it safe to take my vitamins when I am taking a prescription medication?
- Which medications can I take together?
- Now that I feel better, can I stop taking my medication?

Let's face it. Medication is prescribed to help you. But it can hurt you if you take too much or mix medications that may interact with each other. Many people are harmed each year, some seriously, by taking the wrong medication or not taking the medication correctly.

You can help achieve the best results by partnering with the following professionals:

- The doctor, physician assistant, nurse practitioner, or other medical professional who prescribes your medication for you or is in charge of your care.
- A nurse who helps with your care at home, at the doctor's office, or at the hospital.
- The pharmacist who dispenses your prescription and is available to answer questions about your medications.



## WHO'S AT RISK?

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Anyone who takes medication has some risk of a harmful effect. How high that risk is depends on the individual patient's health, the particular medicines a patient is taking, and how patients use their medicines. Nevertheless, national data suggest there are some at greater risk including:

- **Young Children:** Most of these emergency visits are due to young children finding and ingesting medicines on their own, without adult supervision.
- **Older Adults:** Older adults are nearly seven times more likely to be hospitalized after an emergency visit, primarily due to just a few drugs known to require careful monitoring to prevent problems.
- **All Adults:** In 2004, over 7,500 Americans nationwide died of unintentional overdoses of opioid (or narcotic) analgesics (pain medications such as methadone, oxycodone, and hydrocodone), more people than from cocaine or heroin.



## WHAT YOU CAN DO

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Be familiar with all of your medications by keeping a list of the names, how much you take, and when you take them. Include over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and supplements and herbs. Take this list to all your doctor visits.

Make sure you follow the directions for every medication you take. Take your medication exactly as prescribed and do not take medications prescribed for someone else.

Ask questions. If you don't know the answers to these questions, ask your doctor or pharmacist.

- Why am I taking this medication?
- What are the common side effects to watch out for?
- What should I do if they occur?
- When should I stop taking this medication?
- Can I take this medication with the other medicines on my list?