



## Key patient teaching points

When educating patients about prescribed drugs, make sure the discharge plan include these key points.

- Keep a current list of all drugs you take, including prescriptions, over-the-counter (OTC) drugs, complementary and alternative medication (CAMs), herbal supplements, vitamins and minerals, and street drugs. Next to the drug's name, record the dosage and times you take it. If you stop taking a drug, remove it from the list. If a drug has been prescribed for you but you're not taking it, delete it from the list.
- Take your drug list to all healthcare visits and share it with your providers, including dentists and emergency clinicians. Carry it with you when traveling.
- Know why you're taking each medication. That way, you can stay alert for potential problems caused by the drug and evaluate how well it's working.
- If you're planning a trip and are taking a medication that can't be stopped suddenly, make sure to get refills to take with you.
- When traveling, keep drug containers with you instead of packing them in your luggage, which could get lost.
- Follow directions for taking each drug. To remind you what drugs to take and when, mark your calendar, use a weekly pillbox, or use whatever reminder method works.
- Store drugs in a safe, dry place away from children and pets. Don't store them in the bathroom, where heat and humidity can make them unstable and less effective.
- Keep drugs in their original containers so you know what's in each one.
- Dispose of drugs at government drug recycling areas, or check with your pharmacist for safe disposal points.
- If you're a female of childbearing age or are breastfeeding, call your healthcare provider before using any medication to check whether it's safe for the fetus or infant.
- Never be afraid to ask questions. If you're not clear about what drugs you're taking, how or when to take them, or what side effects to watch for, speak up with your healthcare providers and ask questions.
- Remember—you are an important member of your healthcare team. You have crucial information to share with all healthcare providers—information that affects

your health and your drug regimen. Tell all providers about your health history, allergies (especially drug allergies), all medications you're taking (including OTC drugs, CAMs, and herbal remedies), and current health problems.

### Teaching parents

Cover these important points when teaching parents or caregivers about medications prescribed for their child.

- Keep a written list of all medications (prescriptions, CAMs, and OTC and herbal preparations) you give your child, their dosages, and when you give them.
- Use proper measuring techniques for liquid medications. Instead of spoons or other tableware, use the measuring device that came with the medication or another appropriate device.
- Never give adult medications to children. Read labels to make sure the drug is in a pediatric form that's safe for children.
- Contact the child's healthcare provider if you have concerns about medications or to report a change in the child or a new problem that could affect, or be affected by, the drug regimen. Medication problems can arise quickly in a child, so don't wait until more serious problems occur before making that phone call. Remember—you are your child's best advocate.

### Teaching older patients

The growing population of older patients can present a special challenge for medication administration. Memory problems, comorbidities, increased sensitivity to drug effects, and fixed incomes can contribute to potential medication errors. Elders may need a strong advocate to keep them safe. Cover these key teaching points with older patients and their caregivers.

- Keep a written list of all prescriptions, OTC drugs, CAMs, herbal preparations, and vitamins and minerals you're taking; their dosages; and when you take them. Take the list to all medical appointments and keep it posted in your home where emergency providers can find it.
- Prepare a weekly medication box with daily reminders to make sure you follow your drug regimen.
- Remember—you are an important member of your healthcare team. Speak up with your healthcare providers and ask questions.