



Guide for the safe use of drugs

Drugs and Patient Safety

10 suggestions *for the safe use of drugs*

1. Take drugs only if prescribed or directed by your physician

Use drugs only if prescribed by your doctor and not because it was recommended by your relative, friend, if its use has been advertised by the media or if you have read about it in a magazine or on the Internet. When you purchase non-prescriptive drugs, always ask the advice of a doctor or pharmacist.

2. Be informed and aware of the treatment you are doing

Do not hesitate to ask the doctor and/or pharmacist information regarding the drugs you are to take, including information about side effects and interactions with other medications, herbal or phytotherapy products, drinks and/or food. If you don't understand, ask the doctor to repeat with simpler words.

3. Speak openly with the doctor

When you go to the doctor always bring with you a list of all the medication that you are taking (possibly with leaflets), as well medications prescribed by other doctors. Inform the doctor if you are taking homeopathic, herbal, phytotherapy, integrators or other products bought in speciality stores. Inform the doctor if you are breastfeeding, pregnant or planning to do so in the near future.

4. Inform doctor of drug allergies

While admitted in a hospital or other healthcare facility ALWAYS INFORM doctors and nurses if you are allergic to certain drugs or other products/ materials and if you have ever manifested an intolerance to any food items.

5. Refer any disturbances during treatment to your doctor

If you experience disturbances of which your physician hadn't previously warned about, advise him/her immediately: be informed by the doctor as to how to proceed.

6. Respect the instructions given by your doctor “Correct drug, to the correct patient, in the correct dosage at the correct time”

Always verify that the drug you are taking is the one which has been prescribed to you, in the quantity as indicated by the doctor. If you have made a mistake with the medication or quantity, before taking it on your own initiatives, consult with your doctor first. If you forget to take your medication, do not take two doses the following time in order to rectify the missed dose. Increase or reduce the dosage only if indicated by the doctor.

7. Pay Attention if taking more than one medication at a time

If you have been prescribed various drugs for multiple illnesses, inform the doctor or pharmacist of the difficulty of remembering all the drug names and the time in which to take them. Ask the doctor if it would be possible for them to write on the packaging of each, its use and the time to take it, otherwise a memorandum of all the medications with relevant information can also be prepared.

8. Do not substitute drugs nor modify prescribed treatment on your own initiative

When you are admitted to the hospital, inform your doctor or nurses which medications you are taking at the moment and to avoid interactions, do not take medication which you have brought from home: the doctor will decide if it is fitting to confirm, substitute or integrate it into the treatment.

9. Store drugs safely

At home, store the drugs in a dry place, away from direct sunlight or, if appropriate, in the refrigerator and away from the reach of children. Separate the drugs that have similar packaging or name that may cause confusion. Separate as well, adult drugs from children drugs. Do not leave blister packs or open bottles available to everyone: it is a good practice to store drugs in their original packaging with the informative pamphlet. For eye drops, syrups and solutions packaged in single use bottles, it is useful to note on the packaging the date of first opening and of last usage. Before taking a drug, check that the expiry date and if the correct conservation has been respected, note any changes in colour and/or odour.

Do not leave drugs in auto, especially in summertime or exposed to sunlight. During the summer, if you are travelling, even for short trips, transport the medications/drugs which require to be stored at a certain temperature, in thermal bags and/or synthetic ice. If travelling by plane, always bring the drugs with you i.e. have them on hand

10. If you assist someone, do not hesitate to ask for help

If you assist an ill person at home, pay attention to the drug that they must take, strictly adhering to the indication provided by the doctor: if you encounter difficulties or have doubts, advise the family members and if possible, the doctor.