Medication safety is a team effort. You, your doctor, pharmacist, and other caregivers all have a role in making sure you get the right medication, take the correct dosage, and avoid bad reactions. It’s important to know what questions to ask about a new medication and to Speak Up if something doesn’t sound right.

Your medication list is your first responsibility
Make sure to update your medication list whenever you are prescribed a new medicine. Carry your list with you, and share it with your doctor, pharmacist, and other caregivers. Your list should include:

- Prescription medications
- Over-the-counter medications
- Vitamins and other supplements
- Herbs
- Natural remedies

Questions to ask your doctor about new medications
- How will this medication help me?
- Are there any side effects? What are they and how long will they last?
- Are there other medications or foods I should avoid while taking this medication?
- Should I take this medication with food? Or before I go to bed, if it causes drowsiness?
- What should I do if I miss a dose?
- Can I stop taking the medication as soon as I start feeling better, or do I need to take it until it’s all gone?
- What should I do if I cannot afford the medication?

Questions to ask your pharmacist about new medications
- If the medication is a liquid, does it need to be shaken before use?
- If the medication is a pill or capsule, do I need to swallow or chew it? Can I cut or crush it if I need to?
- Is it safe to drink alcohol with this medication?

Tips for medication safety
- Learn about the medication you have been prescribed.
- Ask your doctor to include on the prescription why you are taking the medication, so that it will also be put on the medication label.
- If you believe a medication was prescribed in error, call your pharmacy to ask if the prescription was filled correctly. If it was, contact your doctor.

Tips for medication safety at a hospital
- Make sure your caregivers check your wristband or ask your name before giving you medication.
- Tell your nurse if you think you are about to get the wrong medication if it looks different.
- Tell your nurse if you are getting more or less medication than you normally take.
- Let your doctor know if you don’t feel well after taking a medication.
- If you’re not feeling up to doing these things, ask a friend or relative to help.

Tips for safely storing medications
- Store medication in a cool, dry place away from sunlight — such as in a cabinet or drawer.
- Make sure the child safety cap works and store it where children can’t get to it.
- Discard unused medication in an environmentally friendly way. Not all medication can be flushed down a toilet or thrown in the trash.
  - Find out if there is a medication take-back program at your local pharmacy or police station.
  - Ask your pharmacist how to dispose of unused medication, including syringes and other injectable devices.

The goal of Speak Up™ is to help patients and their advocates become active in their care. Speak Up™ materials are intended for the public and have been put into a simplified (i.e., easy-to-read) format to reach a wider audience. They are not meant to be comprehensive statements of standards interpretation or other accreditation requirements, nor are they intended to represent evidence-based clinical practices or clinical practice guidelines. Thus, care should be exercised in using the content of Speak Up™ materials. Speak Up™ materials are available to all health care organizations; their use does not indicate that an organization is accredited by The Joint Commission.