

# QFHT NEWS

NEWS & INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS OF THE QUEEN'S FAMILY HEALTH TEAM



## MEDICATION SAFETY

### *Understanding your critical role*

Taking medications safely is a shared responsibility between you and your health-care team. While your doctor may select a medication that is most appropriate for your condition, it is important that you understand how to take your medications safely and properly to ensure optimal health benefits.

#### **FIVE TIPS FOR SAFE MEDICATION USE:**

1. Make a list of your medications, including over-the-counter medications and supplements, topical creams, inhalers and eye drops. Share this list with all your health-care providers (e.g. doctor, nurse, pharmacist, etc.) so everyone is aware of your current medications.
2. When starting a new medication, including over-the-counter medications and supplements, always check with your doctor or pharmacist to determine if it interacts with your current medications.

3. To ensure your pharmacist can check your medications against any possible warnings, duplications or interactions, have the same pharmacy dispense all your medications.

4. To avoid confusion, keep your medications in their original containers. If you have trouble opening the containers or remembering when to take your medications, ask your pharmacist to dispense them in easy-to-open vials or compliance / blister packs.

5. Your medications may not be safe for others, even those with similar health conditions, so never share them with anyone. If your medications have expired or are no longer needed, return them to your pharmacy for proper disposal.

When reviewing medications, it's important to ask five questions, developed by the [Institute for Safe Medication Practices Canada](http://www.instituteforsafemedicationpractices.ca):

#### **FIVE QUESTIONS TO ASK**

1. **Changes?** Have any medications been added, stopped or changed, and why? It is important to understand the reasons behind all medication changes.
2. **Continue?** What medications do I need to keep taking, and why? Some medications may be taken for a long time for prevention; others are needed for a short duration only (e.g. to treat an infection). Be clear on why you need to keep taking a medication.
3. **Proper Use?** How do I take my medications? Do I take them the same time each day? What happens if I miss a dose? How do I measure the dose properly? Can I still drink alcohol and take my vitamins? Make sure to understand the proper instructions.
4. **Monitor?** How will I know if my medication is working, and what side effects should I watch for? Also ask what to do if you experience side effects.
5. **Follow-up?** Do I need any tests? Some medications need to be monitored routinely with bloodwork results. Ensure you know when to book your next appointment for follow-up.

These questions can also be used to review your chronic medications with your health-care team on a regular basis. As new information becomes available and practice guidelines get updated, changes may be required, such as stopping a medication that is no longer safe or adjusting doses because of side effects. The goal is to ensure you continue to get the most benefit from your chronic medications, safely.

For more information on safe medication practices, visit [safemedicationuse.ca](http://safemedicationuse.ca) and [consumermedsafety.org](http://consumermedsafety.org).

**Do we have your current email address?** If not, please send it to [info@qfht.ca](mailto:info@qfht.ca) so we can keep you and your family well informed.