

# Universal Medication List

**Developed by:** Gene Smith, PharmD, Associate Professor, UT College of Pharmacy

## ***Goal***

Participants will learn about why and how to use medications safely and effectively by getting help from health care professionals and getting good information about drugs.

## ***Objectives***

Upon completion of this lesson, each participant will be able to:

1. Know why and how to keep a written record of all their medications.
2. Use the Universal medication list to keep a record of all their medications.

## ***Key Points***

1. The adverse effects of medications and medication errors now are estimated to cause 80 - 100,000 deaths in America every year and could be the 8th leading cause of death.
2. Some of the highest risk factors for medication errors and adverse drug effects are being elderly, having cardiovascular problems, and taking more than 6 medications.
3. The incorrect use of over-the-counter (OTC) medications (those you buy without a prescription) is one of greatest dangers of drug misuse. For example, acetaminophen is the leading cause of liver failure in the US.
4. Having good information about your drugs is one of the keys to preventing these problems.
5. Using a written record of all your medications (medication list) can avoid a majority of the medication errors that could occur.
6. A medication list can give valuable information to your doctor about what medications you are taking from other sources like other physicians, or drugs that you buy like Over the counter (OTC), Herbal, Dietary Supplements, etc.
7. A medication list is invaluable to your pharmacist. As it can inform them about medications they may not have on their medication profile. Having a complete list of all drugs allows the pharmacist to do a better check for drug interactions and other adverse drug effects.

## ***Time Required***

This lesson is designed to be 20-30 minutes in length; however depending on the number of participants, number of questions and interest in the subject, additional time may be required.

## ***Teaching plan outline***

- A. The purpose of this lesson is to help you learn why and how to use a medication list to improve your health including getting help from health care professionals.
- B. Ask; do you know of a person who has suffered from a medication error or adverse effect of a medication?

- C. Ask: Which is easier to prevent cancer, heart disease, diabetes or a medication error? Answer: Medication error  
The adverse effects of medications and medication errors now are estimated to cause 80 - 100,000 deaths in America every year and could be the 8th leading cause of death. Some of the highest risk factors for medication errors and adverse drug effects are being elderly, having cardiovascular problems, and taking more than 6 medications.
- D. Ask: What causes most medication errors and adverse drug effects?  
The answer usually is a lack of information or misinformation.
- E. Ask: Who is most likely to have an adverse drug effect?  
Well all of us could be victims: a young adult may have taken more of an OTC drug than is safe. The incorrect use of over-the-counter (OTC) medications (those you buy without a prescription) is one of the dangers of drug misuse. For example, acetaminophen is the leading cause of liver failure in the US due to exceeding the safe dose (4000mg) of that drug.  
It could also be an elderly person who may have an adverse drug reaction that harms them or take more than the doctor prescribed for them because they did not understand the directions.
- F. How can I prevent these problems?  
Ask your doctor or pharmacist if you do not understand how to use a medication. Keep a list of medications that you are taking and share it with all your health care providers so they can help you.
- G. Why are they the best source of information to prevent these problems?  
Your doctor or pharmacist is the best source because they can individualize the information to you and your situation. Also they can answer your questions about things that you have experienced when taking your medications.
- H. What two things should you take to every visit with your doctor or pharmacist?  
You should take a list of questions that you want to ask and a written record of your medications.
- I. Ask: Why should the questions be written down?  
Say: Because your time with your doctor is very short and a lot is being done so you need to have your information organized just like your doctor.
- J. Ask: Do you have trouble remembering the name of all the medications you take or do you have trouble trying to pronounce them? Do you often find yourself unable to tell your doctor what medications you are taking?  
A medication list can solve all these problems for you. Handout the universal medication list

- K. Say: Let's just look at the medication list that we have given you and talk about how to use it. Here is what the medication list can do for you. First notice on the back of the list all of the organizations that sponsor this list and want you to have a medication list. Notice the instructions on how to complete the medication list right above the sponsoring organizations.
- L. Say: Lets try to fill in some of the information on the front page so that we can get you started using your medication list. Put down today's date in when form started. Then fill in your name, address etc. in the personal information box. You may not know the immunization information today but fill it in when you get home.
- M. Say: **Allergies** or adverse drug reactions are very important information and you should know this information so fill it out now. To describe the reaction just tell what happened and when so that you can fill in the details as you talk with your doctor or pharmacist for ex. Skin rash/1998.
- N. Say: Now lets take one example on the medication list and write it in (try and print as it is more legible) so that you understand the process.  
**Date-** when you started the medication or if you do not know – today's date  
**Name of medication and dose-** you can use the generic name or trade name of the Medication –use the one that you are most familiar with and can pronounce and write down the size of the pill ( Valium 10mg)  
**Directions-** write down how you take the medication --like take 2 tablets 2 times a day  
**Date stopped-** when you stop taking a drug write that down here and draw a line through the drug name etc  
**Notes: Reason for taking/doctor's name-** You would write down why you are taking this drug – its purpose, the disease it is treating. However if this drug is prescribed by a physician other than the primary doctor listed on the back of this page then maybe you better write in their name here. If you can get both of them- reason and doctor in so much the better.  
**Remember other people must be able to read it so ask someone else if it is clear to them.**
- O. Say: OK, now you have done one example to learn the process. What questions do you have?
- P. What should you do after every visit to your doctor or pharmacist ?  
 Answer- complete your medication list so it is current
- Q. What two written things do I carry to every visit to the doctor or pharmacist?  
 You need a list of questions that you want to ask that day and your medication list. What is your deadline for completing a med list? \_\_\_\_\_