

# Tips for Taking Medication History

One of the first steps in the medication reconciliation process is engaging in an active discussion with the patient to obtain an accurate medication history. Outlined below are recommendations and sample questions to help obtain the best results.

## GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- Use a systematic approach**
  - For example, begin by asking about prescription medications, then over-the-counter products, and last vitamins/herbals/nutritional supplements—or develop and implement a standardized process workflow.
- Engage patients**
  - Explain the importance of carrying an updated medication list to share with all healthcare providers.
  - Explain the importance of obtaining a complete and accurate medication history.
- Avoid yes/no questions**
  - Ask open-ended questions to solicit additional information.
  - Review medical history - inquire about commonly prescribed medications for health conditions listed.
- Consider all sources to obtain medication history and/or to clarify conflicting information, such as:**
  - Patient
  - Patient’s medication list - ask when the list was last updated
  - Caregiver/family member
  - Prior care provider
  - “Brown Bag” review of medications
  - Community pharmacy
  - Physician(s)
  - Past medical records
- For each medication, record: name, strength, dose, route, frequency, and last dose taken.**  
*\*Note any discrepancies in prescribed medications vs. what the patient reports he/she is actually taking.*



# SAMPLE QUESTIONS

## ALLERGIES

- What medication allergies do you have?
- What type of bad reactions did you have?
- What other allergies do you have (such as food, latex, or environmental allergies)?

## REVIEW OF COMMON HEALTH CONDITIONS/AILMENTS

- What medications do you take for:
  - Headaches? Seizures?
  - Sadness? Anxiety? Sleep?
  - Memory? Confusion?
  - Allergies? Your eyes?
  - Breathing? Inhalers?
  - Your heart? Blood pressure?
  - Blood thinners?
  - Diabetes? Thyroid?
  - Your stomach? Bowels?
  - Your bladder?
  - Your bones? Joints?
  - Pain? Fever?
  - Anything you put on your skin?

## PRESCRIPTIONS

- What pharmacy/pharmacies do you use?
- Are you taking any other medications prescribed by other healthcare professionals like your dentist, ophthalmologist, or chiropractor?
- What medications do you take every day? When do you take them?
- Are there any medications that you take only sometimes or when you need it? What are they? When do you take them?
- Have you used any patches?
- Have you had any injections given at a doctor's office or anywhere else?
- Has your doctor given you any sample drugs to take?

## FOR MEDICATIONS/CONDITIONS WITH INCOMPLETE INFORMATION, CONSIDER:

- Who ordered the medication?
- What is the dose?
- When did you last take it?
- Where do you get your medications?
- Why do you take it?

## OVER-THE-COUNTER MEDICATIONS

- What medicines do you take that you do not need a doctor's prescription to purchase?
- What do you take when you get constipation or diarrhea, heartburn, cough/cold, or headache? How often do you take it? How much?
- What do you take when you get sick? How often? How much?

## HERBAL/NATURAL SUPPLEMENTS

- What vitamins do you take?
- What herbal medications do you take?
- What natural supplements do you take?
- What supplements do you take to improve your diet?

## MEDICATION CONCERNS

- Can you tell me about any missed doses in the past week?
- What problems or concerns do you have with your medications?
- What concerns do you have about side effects?
- Are there medications that you don't think are helping you?
- Are you having difficulty paying for your medications?

Sources: MassPRO. *A Systems Approach to Quality Improvement in Long-Term Care: Safe Medication Practices Workbook*. Available at: [www.mass.gov/Eeohhs2/docs/dph/patient\\_safety/safe\\_med\\_practices\\_08.pdf](http://www.mass.gov/Eeohhs2/docs/dph/patient_safety/safe_med_practices_08.pdf). Accessed December 28, 2010; Tessier E, Henneman EA, Heelon M, et al. *Better Medication History Taking: The Way to Improve Medication Reconciliation*. Available at: [www.newenglandruralhealth.org/cahrh/items/nepi/ma.ppt](http://www.newenglandruralhealth.org/cahrh/items/nepi/ma.ppt). Accessed December 28, 2010.