

Table 27-14: Advice to Patients: Red Flag Medications

- Inform all of your health providers (all physicians including your psychiatrist or substance abuse specialist, dentist, pharmacist) about all of the medications and complimentary, herbal or alternative remedies you are taking.

Always carry a standard list of these as you go for your clinic visits. Remember to mention to your providers any new or unusual dietary supplements, over-the-counter remedies, or vitamins you may be taking. When necessary, take a description of such products along with you on your provider visits or on refill visits to your pharmacy.

- Fill all of your prescriptions at the same pharmacy, as much as possible.

This way, your pharmacist has access to your entire medication profile. He or she will be better able to resolve any problems that may occur as new medications are added to your regimen or if you change your diet or lifestyle.

- Share ALL information about your health care regimen with your providers and pharmacist.

Be frank with your health care providers. Keep them informed of such actions as stopping a drug regimen on your own, taking medications from a friend, or using street drugs, even if you feel they may not approve. Significant drug interactions which can arise that can harm your therapy can probably be circumvented by your provider's knowledge and intervention.

- Whenever you anticipate changing your health care routine, be sure to check with your provider, especially if you are taking one of the *red flag* medications.

Ask your pharmacist if any of your medications belong to this red flag list. If so, always consult your provider or pharmacist before making any changes to your usual health routine, including your intake of vitamins, supplements, herbal remedies, and antacids. Though all of the red flag medications are highly efficacious, they are prone to significant drug-drug interactions and must be administered under close monitoring by an experienced provider. Consider wearing a "Medic-Alert" bracelet especially when taking drugs such as abacavir (Ziagen), in case of an emergency.