



Taking Your Medicine: What You Need to Know

Managing How You Take Your Medicines

INTRODUCTION

“Medicine adherence” means taking your medicines as prescribed by your health care provider. This includes things like getting the medicines, taking them on time, and understanding the directions for how to take them. Nearly 3 out of 4 Americans are not taking their medicines the right way. This can lead to problems and less ability to treat the underlying conditions. Talk to your health care provider if you have any questions about getting or taking your medicines.

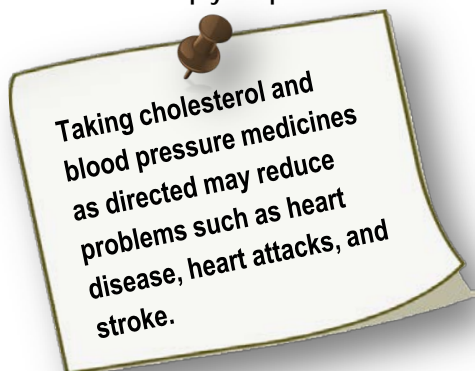
WHAT TYPES OF MEDICINES ARE THERE?

The main types of medicines are described below. You should follow the instructions on the label. If you have questions about how to take your medicines, talk to your health care provider.

Prescription	Over the Counter (“OTC”)	Herbals and Dietary Supplements
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Medicines you get from your licensed health care provider, such as a doctor or nurse practitioner.• Prescribed only for the person named on the label.• You must get it from a pharmacy.• You can also get prescription medicines through legitimate mail order pharmacies or other Internet sources. <p>Be careful when buying medicines over the Internet. Make sure you are buying from a credible and legitimate source. See the VIPPS accreditation program (Verified Internet Pharmacy Practice Sites) for certified online pharmacies by the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Found in drug stores, supermarkets, online, and discount stores.• They are called “over the counter” because you do not need a prescription to get them. You just get them off the shelf.• They can be used by anyone.• You are in charge of picking the right medicine. You also have to know how to take the right dose at the right time. Be careful about OTC product side effects and interactions with your prescription medicines.• Talk to your health care provider to see if it’s safe to take OTC medicines if you are on prescription medicines or have a chronic health condition.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Can be found in a variety of retail locations and online.• Do not require a prescription.• Do not have to follow the same safety rules that prescription or OTC medicines have to follow by law.• The company that makes the supplement, not the FDA, is responsible for making sure it’s safe.• The company does not have to prove that the product is safe, effective, or that it contains the ingredients on the label.

WHY TAKE MEDICINE AS PRESCRIBED BY YOUR HEALTH CARE PROVIDER?

- To help your provider see if the medicines are working the way they are supposed to.



Tips for taking medicines as directed

- Try to go to only one pharmacy for all your medicines.
- Use a pill box to organize your medicines.
- Let your family or a friend know what medicines you are taking.
- Refill your medicine before it runs out.
- Keep a list of your medicines in your wallet or purse.
- Don’t stop taking your medicines without telling your health care provider.
- Contact your health care provider or pharmacist if you think you are having side effects.

Things That May Keep You From Taking Your Medicine

If you do not like taking your medicines because ...	Then try ...
You are worried about becoming dependent or "addicted"	✓ Talking to your health care provider or pharmacist. Most medicines don't cause you to be dependent on them or become "addicted" to them.
You do not like taking medicines at all	✓ Asking your health care provider or pharmacist how it will help you. Most people do not enjoy taking medicine, but they take them because they understand how the medicine can help their condition.
You do not feel sick	<p>✓ Learning more about your medical condition. It will help you understand the need to take your medicines.</p> <p>✓ Even if you don't feel sick, continue to take your medicine unless your health care provider has instructed you to stop.</p>
You do not see the need to take them	<p>✓ Talking with your health care provider that prescribed the medicine. They are the experts in treating your condition.</p> <p>✓ If you feel the medicine is not important, ask your health care provider or pharmacist how it will help you.</p>
You are too busy or you forget	<p>✓ Using pill boxes, calendars, magnets or sticky notes to help remind you.</p> <p>✓ Tie your medicine schedule to daily routines such as brushing your teeth, eating breakfast, or taking it at bedtime.</p>
You can not afford it	✓ Talking to your health care provider for low-cost equivalents. Also talk to your pharmacist about programs to help pay for your medicines.
You are worried about the side effects	✓ Contacting your health care provider or pharmacist if you think you are having side effects. This may or may not be from the medicine you are taking. Your health care provider or pharmacist will help determine if it is a side effect. Your health care provider may adjust your medicine or instruct you to stop taking it.

Talk to your health care provider or pharmacist if you have any questions.

More tips to help you take your medicines



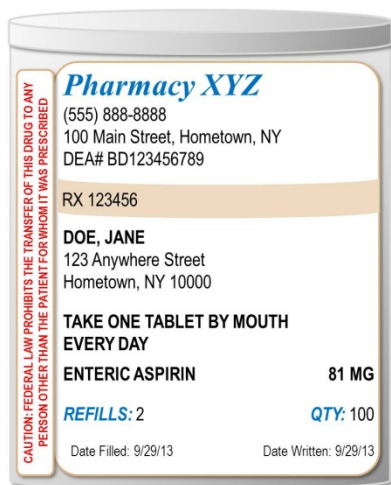
- **Set an alarm**
Set an alarm on your clock or cell phone to remind you if a medicine has to be taken at a particular time.
- **Ask for help**
Tell family and friends about your medicine schedule so they can remind you.
- **Take it with you**
Remember to take your medicines with you when you leave the house. That way you can make sure you take them on time. Pack enough medicines with you when you are away on trips. Always put them in your hand luggage. If you are changing time zones, talk with your health care provider about when to take your medicines.
- **Refill your prescription on time**
Reorder your prescriptions ahead of time to make sure that you never run out.

Why Read Medicine Labels?

Why the Label is Important

When you know how to read your medicine labels, it is easier to take the medicine correctly. It also provides you with contact information if you have questions about the medicine.

The Parts of a Prescription Label

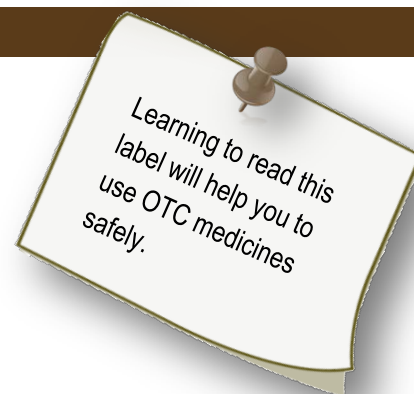


- **Name**—who the prescription is for.
- **Date**—the date the prescription was filled.
- **Prescriber**—name of licensed health care provider that wrote the order for the prescription.
- **Prescription number**—can be used to order refills or identify medicine when you talk to the pharmacy.
- **Pharmacy name and address.**
- **Phone number of the pharmacy**—it is also important to know your pharmacy's phone number. This will help when you need to refill your medicine.
- **Directions** for taking the medicine.
- **Quantity**—amount in the container.
- **Brand name** of the medicine.
- **Generic name** of the medicine.
- **Refills**—number of refills left on this prescription.
- **Safety reminders**—special instructions about taking this medicine. For example: "Do not drink alcoholic beverages," "May cause drowsiness," or "Take with food."
- **Dose or strength** of the medicine.
- **Expiration date** of the medicine.

The Drug Facts Label on OTC Products

All OTC medicines in the United States have a Drug Facts Label.

- **Active Ingredient(s)**: Chemical makeup of the medicine that works with your body to bring relief.
- **Uses**: The only symptoms the medicine is approved to treat.
- **Warnings**: What to avoid and who should not use this.
- **Directions**: Recommended daily dosage and frequency. Follow this strictly.
- **Other Information**: Additional information such as proper storage.
- **Inactive Ingredients**: A chemical compound that has no effect on your body.



Importance of Taking Your Medications as Prescribed

Your medicine is intended to help improve your health now and in the future. It may prevent future problems such as heart disease, heart attacks, and stroke. It is important to take your medicine as your health care provider has told you.

This way, your health care provider can:

- Help make sure the medicine will cause no harm.
- Watch you to see if the medicine is helping you.
- Decide to change your medicine because you may not be getting better, or you start to have problems with it.

Know Your Medication

When you receive a new medication, it is important to make sure you understand what it is and why you are taking it. These are some questions to ask your health care provider or pharmacist:

- What is the name of the medication?
- What is the medication for?
- How should I take it?
- When should I take it?
- What are the possible side effects?
- What do I do if I miss a dose?

It is also important to know the name of your pharmacy and their phone number. This will help when you need to refill your medication. This information and more can be found on the prescription label.



Things You Can Do to Help You Take Your Medications as Prescribed

If you are having any of these problems, try some of the tips listed below:

Forgetfulness

- Use pillboxes, calendars, magnets, or sticky notes to help remind you.
- Tie your medication schedule with daily routines such as brushing your teeth, eating breakfast, or at bedtime.

Not understanding

- Talk with the health care provider who prescribed your medication; he or she is the expert in treating your condition.
- If you feel that a medication is not important, ask your health care provider or pharmacist how it will help you.

Do not like taking them

- Most people do not like taking medications, but take them because they know the medication is helping them get better.
- If you feel the medication is not working or needed, talk with your health care provider or pharmacist.

Fear of side effects

- Always contact your health care provider or pharmacist if you think you are having side effects or having problems. This may or may not be from the medication you are taking. Your health care provider or pharmacist will try to see if it is a side effect. They may adjust your medication or instruct you to stop taking it.

Not feeling sick

- Even if you don't feel sick, you need to continue to take your medication unless your health care provider has instructed you to stop. As you learn more about your medical condition, you will begin to understand why you need to keep taking your medication.
- Talk to your health care provider or pharmacist if you have any questions.

Action Plan for Medication Adherence



Check off items from the list below that you will be able to change or improve. Or you can write in your own action items.

Take your medications as prescribed.

- Learn to read and understand your prescription label.
- Try to go to one pharmacy for all your medications.
- Use a pillbox to organize your medications.
- Refill your medication before it runs out.
- Keep a list of your medications in your wallet or purse.
- Let your family or friends know what medications you're taking.

Work with your health care provider.

- At each visit, ask your health care provider:
 - Which medicine do I need to take?
 - How should I take it?
 - What is the medicine for?
 - Why is it important for me to do this?
- Don't stop taking your medications without telling your health care provider.
- Contact your health care provider or pharmacist if you think you're having side effects.



Note: In addition to medication, your health care provider may recommend healthy lifestyle.

Be active each day. Always check with your health care provider before starting any new exercise program.

- Find something you like to do most days of the week for at least half an hour; try swimming, walking, dancing, or taking a fitness class.
- Take the stairs instead of the elevator.
- Park your car a few blocks away or get off the bus a few stops earlier.

Eat healthy.

- Drink skim milk. Pick lean, broiled meats. Eat more foods with fiber. Try foods such as oatmeal, oranges, pears, carrots, beans, and lentils.
- Cut back on foods high in fat and cholesterol. Eat fewer high-fat cheeses, eggs, creamy sauces, fried foods, and whole milk.

No tobacco.

- Stop smoking or smoke less.
- Talk with your health care provider about ways to stop smoking.

Other

The good news is that:

By taking your medications as prescribed and changing your health habits, you can start to improve your health.

1. Are the items that you have chosen achievable? Yes No

2. What will you do to make these changes? _____

3. When will you make these changes? _____