

Medication – What You Need To Know

There are two kinds of medications:

- Non-Prescription
- Prescription

A **Non-Prescription** medication is one that you do not need to get a prescription from the doctor to get. You could buy these off the shelves from places like the drugstore, the grocery store and the health food store. Some examples are Tylenol, Aspirin, Contact C, Vicks Vapor Rub, Ozonol, Graval, Vitamin C, etc. **You should always check with your Doctor / Pharmacist / Health Professional before deciding to use a non-prescription medication.**

A **Prescription** medication is a medicine or remedy that can only be obtained through a doctor **or a Health Professional**. Some examples are Penicillin, Tylenol #3, Prozac, Dilatin, etc. Doctors try to make sure that people get medication that will help them with their health problems. They also try to make sure that people do not get medication that could hurt them, or that they do not need.

Doctors / Pharmacists / Health Professionals try to make sure that you get medication or treatment that is right for you.

They should:

- know you and your history
- know what medications you are taking
- know what allergies you have
- know what problems you have had in the past, and
- know what other medications or treatments have already been tried

Using one doctor instead of many doctors makes it easier for you to get the treatment that is right for you.

If you are unhappy with the doctor you have been using, try other ones until you find a doctor that you feel comfortable with.

Doctors decide:

- what kind of prescription medication you should take
- how you should use it
- how much you should take
- how often you should take it
- how long you should take it for

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If you receive a prescription from your doctor, take it to a drugstore and the pharmacist will prepare the medication for you. He gives you what the doctor has ordered for you. It will have a label on it that shows:

- your name
- the name of the medication
- the strength of the medication
- the date the prescription was prepared
- the times you should use the medication
- the directions for how you should use the medication

You should ask the pharmacist if you have any questions about the medication.

If you have a medical services insurance card that you can show to the pharmacist you will have to pay a small amount for your prescription medication. If not, you pay the entire cost of the medication at the cashier counter. You will always need to pay for non-prescription drugs.

It is very important to learn about the medication you are going to be using, whether it is prescription or non-prescription medication.

You can learn a lot about a medication by:

- talking to your doctor/healthcare professional
- talking to the pharmacist
- reading information about the medication from the container label
- reading the information sheet that comes with your medication
- reading handouts from the drugstore

For your safety, you need to know:

- what the medication is for
- how to take the medication (e.g. swallowing, spread on the skin, drop in your eye)
- special instructions (e.g. with or without food, with lots of water)
- what times to take it
- how much of it to take
- the side effects it might cause
- if it is okay to drink alcohol while you are on the medication
- if it can be affected by other medications you might be taking
- how long you should take it for
- what you should do if you forget to take your medication, or if you take too much of it

If the problem doesn't get better or gets worse, you need to go to see your doctor or the pharmacist about it.

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It is important to store medication correctly, in its own container. It might need to be kept cool or dry. It must be kept in a safe place to protect other people (especially children) or pets in the home.

Someone else could get very sick if they took your medication. They might have:

- an allergic reaction
- a rash
- nausea
- a headache
- shortness of breath
- dizziness

They could even die. If you take someone else's medication and have a bad reaction, you should see your doctor or go to the hospital.

Never take anyone else's medication!

If you need to get more of your medication, you can ask for a refill. The person who gave you your prescription is the one who decides if you can have more of the same medication. It might say on your label that you can have one or more refills.

It is a good idea to review the medications that you take with you doctor once a year.

Medication is only good for a set amount of time. A date is printed on the container or the label that tells you when the medication is not good anymore. This is called an expiry date. You should take expired medication to the pharmacist and he will dispose of it. Do not throw it in the garbage or flush it down the toilet. It could be dangerous and might cause harm to other people, animals or the environment.

Do not use expired medication.

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