



# KNOW YOUR PRESCRIPTIONS

### Definition:

A prescription is an order, written or transcribed electronically by a physician, dentist or other licensed health care provider with prescriptive authority. Prescriptions include the dose, preparation and administration of a medicine or other treatment.

It is important to understand your prescription medications. When you get a new prescription, make sure you understand what your doctor is prescribing, why you need to take it, and how often you should take it. The following are some ways to be more informed about your prescription medications (Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality [AHRQ], 2012)

### When your doctor prescribes a new medication, it is important to ask the following questions (AHRQ, 2012):

- ◆ The name of the medication and what it's supposed to do for you
- ◆ If it's okay to substitute a less-expensive generic brand for the name brand drug
- ◆ What the dose is and if you should avoid any other medicines, drinks, the sun or food while you're taking it
- ◆ How many refills you should get
- ◆ What you should do if you miss a dose or if you take too much of it
- ◆ What side effects you should watch out for

### When you pick up your prescription, you can ask the pharmacist the following questions (AHRQ, 2012):

- ◆ Whether the drug is what your doctor ordered
- ◆ If an information sheet is available on the medication that explains possible side effects
- ◆ What the medicine label means; for example, if the label says you need to take it three times a day, ask whether that means you should take it every 8 hours or at breakfast, lunch, and dinner.
- ◆ How you should measure the medication if it's a liquid

### What you should bring when you visit the doctor (AHRQ, 2012):

- ◆ You can bring your current medication list and bottles when seeing your doctor or pharmacist. This can help you review your medication list and compare old medications to new ones. You should also have a list of medication allergies, along with any known side effects. It is also important to acknowledge alcohol or drug use, as this can affect how your medications



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work. Make sure that you understand the side effects, as well as the dosing and timing of when you should take each medication. Always ask questions about your medications.

- ◆ You should schedule a follow up visit with your doctor to track your progress. If you have received any new prescriptions from other doctors or have started taking new over-the-counter medications, be sure to let your doctor know during your office visit (Consumer MedSafety, 2012).

### *Disclaimer:*

*Medline does not practice medicine, and no information presented on this website is medical advice or intended as a substitute for the advice of a physician. All information on this website concerning medical conditions is from publicly available sources.*

## REFERENCES

1. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (2012). Know Your Prescriptions. Retrieved July 14, 2015, from <http://www.ahrq.gov/patients-consumers/patient-involvement/healthy-men/prescriptions/index.html>Help Guide (2015).
2. Consumer MedSafety (2012). Prevent Medication Errors - Consumer Med Safety. Retrieved July 14, 2015, from <http://www.consumermedsafety.org/tools-and-resources/medication-safety-tools-and-resources/consumer-medsafety-lists/item/597-top-ten-things-you-can-do-to-stay-safe-with-your-medicines-when-you-are-in-the-hospital>