

MEDICATIONS — WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

Medications are used to treat or prevent illnesses, provide symptom relief, improve quality of life, and come in a variety of colors, shapes, sizes, and doses. Every medication has two names: the generic name and the brand name. It is important that you are aware of all of the medications that you are taking. Since using multiple medications can be difficult and may cause side effects. Make sure you can always locate information about your medications. You should be able to manage your medications by knowing, asking, and being in control of your healthcare (Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality [AHRQ], 2012).

Over-the-Counter (OTC) Medications, Vitamins & Supplements (National Library of Medicine [NLM], 2015)

Over-the-counter (OTC) medications are drugs you can buy at pharmacies, convenience stores, or grocery stores without a prescription from your healthcare provider. The following are examples of over-the-counter medications:

- ♦ Aspirin
- ♦ Acetaminophen
- ♦ Ibuprofen
- ♦ Antacids
- ♦ Laxatives
- ♦ Allergy medicines
- ♦ Cold medicines

Prescription Medications (NLM, 2015)

Prescription medications require a prescription from a doctor or other healthcare professional licensed to prescribe medications, and should be taken exactly as directed and only by the person for whom they are prescribed.

Questions You Should Ask When Being Prescribed or Choosing Medications (AHRQ, 2012):

- ♦ What is the name of the medication (brand and generic)?
- ♦ Who prescribed the medication?
- ♦ What is the purpose of the medication?
- ♦ How do I take this medication, and how often do I take it?
- ♦ Do I take it at the same time every day?
- ♦ How much of this medication should I take?
- ♦ Should I take this medication with food or something to drink?
- ♦ Do I need to avoid the sun while taking this medication?
- ♦ How long will it take for the medicine to start working?
- ♦ What side effects should I expect with this medication?
- ♦ Is there anything important that I need to know about this medication?



- ♦ What should I do if I miss a dose?
- ♦ Is there written information available for this medication?

When taking medication, it is important to do the following (Consumer MedSafety, 2012):

- ♦ Read the label to make sure you are taking it correctly
- ♦ Ask questions; don't be afraid to call your doctor or pharmacist
- ♦ Put all of your medications in a place where children and pets cannot reach them
- ♦ Keep track of all your medications
- ♦ Make sure you understand which medications you are allergic to, discuss these allergies with your doctor and pharmacist
- ♦ Use a compartmented medication box if you take many different medications
- ♦ Report any medication side effects to your doctor

When taking medication, it is important to avoid the following (NLM, 2015):

- ♦ Sharing medications
- ♦ Stopping medications without consulting your healthcare provider
- ♦ Placing medications in a different medication bottle
- ♦ Taking medications in the dark

When disposing of expired, unwanted or unused medication, make sure it is done properly. It is dangerous to flush medications or throw them into the garbage. Contact your local law enforcement agency or local waste management authorities to learn about medication disposal sites and options (U.S. Food and Drug Administration [FDA], 2015).

Disclaimer:

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