

Your Medicine

Questions for Your Doctor and Pharmacist

You may feel nervous at your doctor's appointment or in a rush to pick up your prescription at the pharmacy. However, there's certain information you should know about the medicines you take—especially if you're taking a medicine for the first time. Be prepared—make a list of questions before visiting your doctor or collecting your prescription.



What to Know Beforehand

Here are some questions that you should be able to answer and understand BEFORE starting your medicine.

- What's the name of the medicine?
 - What's the medicine supposed to do and how does it work?
 - How do I take the medicine? For example, with food or on an empty stomach?
 - How much medicine (how many pills) do I take?
 - When should I take my medicine? For example, does "4 times a day" mean it's okay to take it at 8 AM, noon, 4 PM, and 8 PM? OR do I have to take it every 6 hours and get up in the middle of the night—8 AM, 2 PM, 8 PM, and 2 AM?
 - Will there be a problem if I take this medicine at the same time I take my other medicine? Can I take it along with over-the-counter (nonprescription) medicine?
 - Do I need to avoid certain foods, drinks, other medicines, or activities when I take this medicine?
- How long do I have to take the medicine before it will start working?
 - What should I do if I miss or forget to take my medicine?
 - Are there any side effects? What should I do if they occur?
 - Can you give me written information about this medicine?



How Your Pharmacist Can Help You

He or she can answer your questions, in person, at the drugstore, or over the telephone.

Talk to your pharmacist! Let him or her know ALL of the medicine you take (of course, your doctor needs to have this information, too). Include medicine you bought without a prescription (over-the-counter medicine) like eyedrops, vitamins, or creams and ointments you spread on your skin. It's also important to mention if you have taken a friend's or relative's medicine.

Many pharmacies keep track of medicines on the computer. If you buy all of your medicine (both prescription and over-the-counter) in one place, your pharmacist can help make sure your medicines don't interact harmfully.

Your pharmacist may be able to have your medicine delivered to you. This could help in bad weather or if you're unable to pick up your medicine in person.

Give your pharmacist as much information about your medicines and lifestyle as possible. If you run into problems, he or she can

- Help you recognize your medicines
- Give you tips on how to remember to take your medicine
- Suggest ways of taking your medicine if it's difficult for you to swallow pills

If you don't live with small children, and you have problems opening childproof caps, ask your pharmacist to put your medicine in an easy-to-open container.

If you have trouble reading the print on your medicine labels, ask your pharmacist to print labels in larger type for easier reading.

Remember

Medicines do their job only if you take them correctly. It's important to understand how medicines should be taken and to take them exactly as prescribed. Your doctor and pharmacist can help you get the most benefit from your medicines. Don't hesitate to ask questions or ask for help!