

Many people need to take more than one type of medication. Medications can play a helpful role in your health or the health of a person you are caring for. But keeping track of more than one medication can be difficult. When do you take them? Will they interact with each other? Here are some tips that will make managing medications easier:

- ✓ Understand why you need each medicine.
- ✓ Keep track of all types of medicines.
- ✓ Use a list or chart for tracking medicines.
- ✓ Consider using a calendar or other reminder system.
- ✓ Store Medicines as directed
- ✓ Take your list of medications to every appointment.
- ✓ Make sure you understand possible side effects.
- ✓ Ask one doctor to oversee all medicines.



Understand why you need each medicine.

- ✓ If you are not sure what a specific medicine is for, ask the doctor or pharmacist.
- ✓ Make sure you follow the doctor's instructions exactly. Don't discontinue medicines unless the doctor says to do so.
- ✓ Ask what you should do if you miss a dose or take too much.

Keep track of all types of medicines.

- ✓ Track prescription medication and over-the-counter medicines. Also keep a record of vitamins, supplements, herbs, natural and homeopathic medicines.
- ✓ Over-the-counter medicines (like cold medicine and pain relievers) may interact with prescription drugs. Vitamins, supplements and herbs can have side effects and interact with other medicines, too.
- ✓ Tell your health care provider about all medicines. Talk about alcohol or tobacco use, too, because they can interact with some medications.

Use a list or chart for tracking medicines.

- ✓ Ask your doctor or pharmacist for a form to chart your medications, or make one yourself.
- ✓ Include the drug's name, how much you take (dose), how often you take it (frequency) and special instructions.

- ✓ You can also include a description (for example: small pink pill with letter "H"). Or tape a sample of the medicine to the list or chart.
- ✓ Keep the information you get with the medicine. Store it with the chart or in another convenient location.

Consider using a calendar or other reminder system.

- ✓ A calendar can help you track what to take and at what time.
- ✓ Pill organizers and containers can be very helpful for some people.
- ✓ Ask your pharmacist or doctor before using pill organizers. They are not advised for some medicines.

Store Medicines as directed.

- ✓ Some medicines need to be refrigerated. Others should not be exposed to air, heat or light. Read the labels or ask your pharmacist.
- ✓ Make sure all medicines are out of reach of children and pets.
- ✓ Check expiration dates. Order refills ahead of time so that you don't run out.

Take your list of medications to every appointment.

- ✓ It is important for every doctor (including eye doctors and dentists) to know all of the medications a patient is taking.
- ✓ Take your list to doctor appointments. Put a copy on the refrigerator so it is easy to find in case of an emergency.
- ✓ Make sure all family members or caregivers know where the list is kept.

Make sure you understand possible side effects.

- ✓ Some medicines should not be mixed with other medicines, alcohol or certain foods.
- ✓ Ask about changes in medications or new warnings on old medications.
- ✓ If you have new symptoms after starting a medication, talk to the doctor or nurse right away.

Ask one doctor to oversee all medicines.

- ✓ It is not unusual to have more than one doctor or health care provider prescribe medicines.
- ✓ Ask one doctor (such as a family doctor or internist) to periodically review all medications. Ask if any medications are no longer needed.
- ✓ If possible, get your medicines from the same pharmacy. It will be easier for the pharmacist to answer your questions if he or she has a record of all your medications.

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If you have questions or concerns about medications you are taking, talk with your doctor, health care provider or pharmacist.