



TIPS

for Taking Medicine

Medication can help you feel better, provided that you take your prescribed doses as instructed by your doctor. Many patients encounter problems because they are taking the wrong medicine or the right medicine incorrectly. The following tips can help you stay safe when taking medication.

Be in the know. Jot down any questions that you have about taking your medicine before you go to see your doctor. Ask why you need to keep taking the medicine and what may happen if you do not take your medication as prescribed.

Make it a team effort. Work with your health care team by providing them with the information that they need to help keep you healthy. Health care workers should know about any prescription medicine, herbal or dietary supplements, and OTC medicine (eg, allergy medicine, cough medicine, and aspirin) that you are taking, which could help you avoid problems such as drug interactions.

It pays to be extra careful. Ask your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist to explain the right way to take your medicine before you start using it. Feel free to ask for clarification when instructions about taking your prescription are not clear. Seek clarification, too, if you do not know the meaning of a word on the label of any medication that you are prescribed.

Properly store your medicine. Never store your medication in the bathroom, particularly in the cabinet. There is too much moisture in the bathroom, which can speed up a drug's breakdown process and make the medicine less potent before its expiration date. Instead, store your medicine in a dry and cool place that is not within a child's or pet's reach.

Remember to take your medication. Plan a daily schedule of how and when to take your medicine, and place your schedule where you can see it. Set your computer calendar, watch, or kitchen timer as a reminder to continue your medicine regimen. Likewise, post notes on the bathroom mirror or near clocks.

Never share medicine. Your prescription medication was prescribed for you alone. Never give your medicine to anyone else, even if you have the same medical condition. Also, never take prescription medicine that was not prescribed for you, because the effects can be lethal.

Your doctor is just a phone call away. If you are ill at ease with taking your medicine, don't discontinue taking it without first consulting your doctor. Speak with your doctor if you feel your medicine isn't working as it should, you are experiencing side effects as a result of taking your medicine, or if you feel your medicine is too difficult to take.

Properly discard any unused medication. A majority of unneeded medication can be thrown away in your household trash after being mixed with an undesirable substance (eg, coffee grounds or kitty litter) and sealed in a reclosable plastic bag. Be sure to follow the special disposal instructions for each medicine, as advised on the prescription container. The FDA also offers an abundance of information on how to dispose of medication.

This page is part of an ongoing series of practical tips for patients with neurologic disorders. If you have compiled clinically relevant tips that you wish to share, please contact the editor at info@neurologyreviews.com.

Tips for Patients are available for download at www.neurologyreviews.com.

