



HOW TO ASK THE RIGHT QUESTIONS AND GET THE MOST FROM YOUR MEDICINES

If you're like most adults age 45 and older, you take prescription drugs to manage your health or treat a condition. These tips will help you manage your medications wisely for good health and safety.

TALK TO YOUR DOCTOR AND PHARMACIST

When it comes to your health, there is no right or wrong question. You have the right and responsibility to ask any question you like about how medications may affect your body and your life. This is not the time to be shy. Yes, doctors are busy, but they can and will take time to answer your questions.

You may want to request extra time when you set up your appointment. Let the office know you need a few extra minutes, or "drug consultation time." This way you'll feel less rushed. Use these questions to help you write your own list of things you want to know.

Conversation is the Best Medicine

- > Write down your questions and take them to your appointment.
- > Ask the questions for each drug that you take.
- > Bring both your questions and answers to your doctor and pharmacist.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

1. What is the name of this medication? What is it supposed to do? What are the side effects?
2. When do I start and stop taking this medication?
3. Will this medication work safely with the other medications I am taking?
4. Can non-drug actions help my symptoms in addition to, or instead of this drug therapy?
5. Are there other medications that can be used to treat my condition? If so, how do these medications compare in safety, effectiveness, and price?

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6. Why is this the right medicine for my condition, age, and gender?
7. How do I take this medicine?
8. Should I avoid certain foods, alcohol, dietary supplements, or driving while taking this medication?

WHAT TO SAY

It is important for you to tell your doctor about all the medications you take: prescription, over-the-counter, and herbal. The best way to track your medications and help your doctor and pharmacist is to create a medications list, or “personal medication record.”

Use a personal medication record (PMR) to help you and your doctor and pharmacist keep track of your medications. A PMR is a list of everything that you take, the doses, and how you take them. Consider using a pencil so that you can update your record easily.

Be sure to include the following information:

- > Your personal information, name and contact details.
- > Your physicians’ names and contact information.
- > Your emergency contact information.
- > Your pharmacy contact information, including hours.
- > The name of your medication(s), reason for use, form (e.g., pill, liquid, injection), dose, start and stop date for each medication.

Share Your Personal Medication Record

Make copies

- > Give one to your doctor, one to your pharmacist, one to a loved one.
- > Carry one with you and keep a copy at home.

Keep it updated

- > Note if you are taking new medications or stopping medications.
- > Record any drug allergies, side effects, or sensitivities you have.

MAKE WISE CHOICES

There are many options when it comes to your health and medications. Exploring your choices can save you money while improving your health. It’s as simple as 1, 2, 3...

1. CONSIDER GENERIC DRUGS

Generic drugs have the same medical effect as brand-name drugs, but usually cost less. Ask your doctor about generics. In most cases, they can help you save money without compromising your health.

2. COMPARE DIFFERENT DRUGS

You have many choices when it comes to managing your health and using prescription drugs. There is evidence-based research (EBR) that helps you compare drugs developed to treat a particular condition, tells you what they do and what they cost. AARP has a guide that summarizes and compares evidence about some drugs for many common conditions. More drugs will be added as the site continues to develop. You can explore AARP's drug research at www.aarp.org/health/comparedrugs. You can download the reports and take them to your doctor or pharmacist to discuss your best treatment options. Remember to read, compare, and consult.

3. FIND DISCOUNTS

Just like shopping for clothes or food, you can research and shop for medication discounts.

Tips for Lowering Costs

- > Consider a prescription discount card.
- > Fill your prescription online or through mail order.
- > Enroll in the new Medicare prescription drug benefit program.
- > Check with your state or local government for prescription assistance programs.

4. MANAGE YOUR MEDICINES

It's important to take your medications carefully and correctly. You put your health at risk if you do not follow your medication instructions, fill your prescriptions, or take the required doses.

Notify your doctor immediately if:

- > you have any problems or concerns with your medicines.
- > you can't stick to your medication plan because of cost, side effects, or other reasons.

Remember, tell your doctor the truth about what you are and aren't taking. Together you can make medication adjustments that are best for your health and safety.

When Talking to Your Doctor or Pharmacist, Always:

- > Share the names of all your medicines.
- > Ask about any possible side effects.
- > Question if there are any alternatives.

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AARP RESOURCES

AARP'S DRUG RESEARCH—www.aarp.org/health/comparedrugs

Are the most expensive drugs always the best? Not necessarily. AARP has developed this online consumer guide to help you find the effective and affordable drugs. Read about comparable drugs. Compare their prices. Then consult with your medical provider to choose the right drug for you—at the right price.

MEDICINES AND YOU—www.aarp.org/medicinesandyou

“Medicines and You” is AARP’s new online course that will put you in control of your health by showing you the choices you have for using medications wisely and saving costs. The course is easy to follow, and you can go at your own pace. It includes resources such as lists of questions to ask your doctor and pharmacist and a personal medication record to track your medicines.

MEDICARE—www.aarp.org/health/medicare/drug_coverage

Find information and resources about prescription drug benefits and Medicare Part D.

RESEARCHING YOUR HEALTH SEMINAR—www.aarp.org/researchhealth

The Internet offers quick access to medical information, but the amount of it can be overwhelming. How do you know whether it’s reliable? AARP’s free online seminar helps you explore four reputable and easy to use websites to research medical conditions and medicines to treat them. Take charge of your health.

PERSONAL MEDICATION RECORD

The best way to track medications and help the doctor, other medical professional, or pharmacist is to create a medications list, or “personal medication record” (PMR). As mentioned earlier, this is a list of all the medicines, including over-the-counter drugs and herbal supplements, that a consumer takes, the doses, and how they are taken. This PMR includes spaces for personal information, name and contact information; physicians’ names and contact information; emergency contact information; and the name of the medication, reason for use, form (pill, liquid, injection), use, dose, start and stop date for each medication.

To order copies of the *Personal Medication Record* (D18358) or additional copies of this fact sheet, write to the address below, visit our website, or call us and ask for your free copies.

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