



Medication Safety

Medicines can help you manage your health, but only if you take them correctly. If you're having problems taking your medicine as prescribed, try thinking about why you're having trouble.

You might not be sure why your medicine is important or if it is working. Maybe you just can't remember to take your medicine every day. Or perhaps you're having a hard time paying for medicines or dealing with side effects. If so, the following tips might help.

Quick Tips: Taking Medicines Wisely

- **Plan a daily schedule.** It should include what your medicines are and how and when to take them. Put your schedule where you can see it. Take it with you when you travel.
- **Get a pillbox.** It should hold a week's worth of pills. Be sure to leave at least one pill in the original bottle. That way, if you forget what a pill is for, you can find it in the bottle it came from.
- **Post reminders.** Place notes near clocks or on the bathroom mirror to remind you to take your medicines.
- **Make it routine.** Take your medicine when you do another daily task, such as brushing your teeth or making morning coffee. This will help make taking medicine into a routine.
- **Set an alarm.** Set your watch, kitchen timer, or computer calendar to remind you when to take your medicine.
- **Don't run out.** Figure out how long your bottle of medicine will last. Put refill reminders on your calendar so you won't run out of medicine.
- **Keep your bottle in your hand.** If you get interrupted before you can take your medicine, keep the bottle in your hand. This will help you remember to take it later.
- **Make it affordable.**
 - Check with pharmacies in your area to compare prices for the medicines you need.
 - Ask your doctor if there is a lower-cost medicine you can take. Maybe you can take a generic medicine. There may be another way that you could save money, such as buying medicines in bulk or through a mail-order service.
 - Ask your doctor about programs that may help with medicine costs. Some drug companies have programs that help people who can't afford medicine. Your state may also have a program that provides drugs at a lower cost. You can find out more information at www.pparx.org.

Don't try to save money by taking only half a dose or by taking your medicines less often. If you don't take the right amount of medicine at the right time, it won't work the way it should.

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When to Call Your Doctor

If you're having a problem with your medicine, don't stop taking it. Keep in mind that your medicines can help you avoid complications that could happen because of your health problem.

- **Talk to your doctor first if you're having a problem with side effects.** You may be able to take a different medicine, or your doctor may have ideas about how to reduce side effects. If an upset stomach is the problem, for example, ask if you can take the medicine with food.
- **You feel that your medicine isn't working.** Keep in mind that some medicines take time to work. Always talk with your doctor before you stop taking your medication.
- **Your medicine is too hard to use.** Your doctor can give you recommendations on how to make your medicine easier to take, such as taking it with certain foods or by breaking up larger pills into smaller pieces. If you use an inhaler, ask your doctor to show you how to use it. If you need to give yourself shots, ask your doctor for tips on how to make it easier.

Current as of: September 25, 2023

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