

Taking it right

About taking your medicine the right way



Did you know?

Each year, one half of the prescriptions that are filled are not taken the way the health care provider intended.¹ You should know how to take your medicine the right way. This is as important as getting it in the first place.

Think back. Have you ever:

- Forgotten to take your medicine?
- Been careless about taking your medicine?
- Stopped taking your medicine when you felt better?
- Stopped taking your medicine if it made you feel worse?

If you answer “yes” to any of these questions, you may not be getting the most from your medicine.

I feel fine when I do not take my medicine. Does this mean I do not need it?

Not always. Many illnesses do not always have symptoms. In fact, if you have cancer, you may not have known you had it until your health care provider told you. You also may not feel sick.

But, you do need the medicine that your health care provider gave you. Or you may not have the chance to benefit from this medication, and you may get other health problems. Taking your medicine can help.

My medicine is not making me feel better. Can I just take more?

Do not change how much medicine you take, unless your health care provider tells you. Medicines do not always work the same way for everyone. Tell your health care provider if you do not feel better.

My medicine upsets my stomach. Can I take less so this won't happen?

Some medicines may upset your stomach no matter how little you take. But how much medicine you take may not be why your stomach is upset. If you have a problem, call your health care provider or pharmacist. Your health care team can tell you if there is a way to avoid the problem.

What will help me take my medicine the way I should?

Ask your health care provider to explain your medicine to you. Learn as much as you can about your medicine. Learn why it is important to take it. Use a reminder to help you remember to take your medicine the way your health care provider told you.

I feel better. Can I stop taking my medicine?

Do not stop taking the medicine before your health care provider wants you to stop. You may not get well as soon as you could, or you might not stay well.

How long can I save medicine in case I need it later?

Medicines have expiration dates. If that date has passed, you should not take the medicine. Check the label to see when your medicine expires.

You should never save medicine. Even though you think you have the same illness as before, it may be different. This time the old medicine might not be the best one for you. Only your health care provider can decide that.

It is important for you to understand how and when to take your medicine.

Make sure you know the answers to the questions in the boxed area of this newsletter.

Reference: 1. World Health Organization. Adherence to long-term therapies: evidence for action. http://www.who.int/chp/knowledge/publications/adherence_report/en/print.html. Accessed October 30, 2009.

Take it right!

Make sure you know these things about each medicine you take:

- Its name
- Why you are taking it
- How much to take each time
- How often to take it
- When to take it each day
- How long to keep taking it
- What foods, drinks, other medicines, or activities to avoid
- What the side effects might be and what to do if you have them
- Where to keep it
- If and when you need to get a refill

You should also ask these questions:

- What should I do if I miss a dose?
- Should I take it with food or on an empty stomach?
- If the label says to take “3 times a day” or “4 times a day,” at what times should I take it?

Ask your health care provider or pharmacist to give you this information.

Remember, you are the most important part of your health care team!



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