

# Tips For Safe Medication Use

Improper medication use is a major cause of health problems and emergency department visits. Don't end up in the emergency room — make sure you know about your medications and how to use them to get the most benefit!

## 10 Questions You Should Ask About Your Medication

1. What is the name of my medication?

Prescription medications may have two names:

- Common (generic) name
- Brand name

The label on your medication will list both names.



2. Why am I taking this medication?

3. When will the medication start working, and how will I know the medication is working?

4. What is the best way to take my medication?

- Make sure that you know how much medicine you need to take, how often you need to take it, and when the best time of day is to take it.
- Speak to your health care provider about whether there are any special instructions about your medication.

5. What should I do if I forget to take my medication?

6. What are potential side effects of my medication, and what should I do if I think I am experiencing a side effect?

7. Are there any medications or foods that I may need to avoid with my medication?

- Speak to your health care provider about potential drug interactions.

8. How long do I need to continue taking my medication?

9. If I need to stop this medication, are there any special instructions to follow?

- If you are going to stop a medication, speak to your health care provider about whether this can be done safely. For example, some medications may need to be gradually reduced.

10. How do I store my medication safely?

Knowing the answers to these questions could prevent you from having problems!

**Please speak to your health care provider if you are unsure of any information about your medication.**

## Having trouble sticking with your medications?

You're not alone! Half of all people prescribed medications are not using them properly or not using them at all! This can lead to serious health problems, emergency room visits, and hospitalization. You can protect your health by taking your medication as directed. Sometimes this can be difficult, but here are a few tips to make this easier:



1. **Keep a list of your medications.** Your health care provider can review your current medications and provide you with a medication list to help you remember which medications you are taking and when. Keep your medication list with you at all times. It may also be important to periodically bring in your medications along with your medication list to your medical appointments to update any changes.
2. **Simplify.** Talk to your health care provider about ways to make your medication routine simpler.
3. **Get into a routine.** Take your medication at the same time as something else you do regularly, such as after your brush your teeth. Check with your pharmacist to see whether your medication needs to be taken with food, on an empty stomach, or at a particular time of day in order to work best.
4. **Organize your medications with a dosette or blister pack.** These handy packages organize your medications by day or by time of day (e.g. morning, noon, afternoon, bedtime). Blister packs are made by your pharmacy, while dosettes can be filled by you, your caregiver, or your pharmacist. Dosettes and blister packs make it easy to tell which medications should be taken at what times, and let you see whether you've taken a dose.

### **Concerned about side effects, cost, or whether you really need the medication?**

Talk to your health care provider to help decide whether the medication is right for you, or whether there are other options.

## Your Family Health Team Pharmacist

Your Family Health Team pharmacist, Suzanne Singh, works with your family doctor and health care team and may help answer some of your questions about medications. If you wish to speak to Suzanne, or make an appointment with her, please contact her secretary, Corina Rusu, at 416-586-4800 ext. 5157.

Ray D. Wolfe Department of Family Medicine  
Granovsky Gluskin Family Medicine Centre  
60 Murray Street, 4th Floor, Box 25  
Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5T 3L9

**MOUNT SINAI HOSPITAL**   
Joseph and Wolf Lebovic Health Complex  
Granovsky Gluskin Family Medicine Centre

Mount Sinai Academic Family Health Team