

EDUCATE BEFORE YOU MEDICATE

Ten Questions to Ask About Your New Medication

Before taking any new medications, it is important to know the answers to the following questions so that you can get better results from your medicine and help prevent unsafe combinations of medicines. Be sure to discuss these questions with your healthcare provider, dentist, and/or pharmacist before beginning a newly prescribed medicine.

1. What is the name of the medication and what is it supposed to do?

It is important to ask the name and dose of any new medication. Make sure you understand the specific role it will play in your treatment.

2. When and how do I take it?

It is important to know if you can take your new medicine with or without food, how you should take it with other medicines, what time of day the medicine should be taken, how much or how many you should take, and how often.

3. How long do I take this medicine?

You should always ask how long you will be taking a new medicine. Some medicines are taken for just a few days and others are taken for months or years. Always finish your medicine unless otherwise advised by your healthcare provider.

4. Does this medicine contain anything that can cause an allergic reaction?

Some medicines interact with other medicines, some with foods, and some with certain medical conditions. Tell your healthcare provider, dentist, or pharmacist about any past reactions or any allergies you have had when taking medicine.

5. Should I avoid alcohol, any other medicines, foods, and/or activities?

Medicines can cause different types of reactions when taken with alcohol, food, and other medicines including prescription medications, over-the-counter medications, and herbal supplements. It is important to ask your healthcare provider, dentist, or pharmacist if you should restrict or avoid

certain foods, beverages, or activities (such as driving) while taking the prescribed medicine.

6. Should I expect any side effects from this medicine?

It is important to ask if you should expect any side effects from your new medicine. If so, are the effects short-term or long-term? Always ask who you should call in your healthcare provider's office if you experience problems or have questions after you take the medicine.

7. What if I forget to take my medicine?

Ask your healthcare provider what to do if you miss a dose. Depending on the type of medicine, missing even one day can make a difference in how well the medicine works. If you miss a dose, it is important not to double your medication without consulting your healthcare provider.

8. Is it safe to become pregnant or to breast-feed while taking this medicine?

Tell your healthcare provider, dentist, and/or pharmacist if you are pregnant, may get pregnant, or if you are nursing a baby.

9. Is there a generic version of this medicine that can be prescribed?

One way to save money on your prescription medicines is to ask if there is a generic version of the medicine. You might ask if the generic version will work just as well as the name-brand medicine you are being prescribed.

10. How should I store this medicine?

Make sure you store the medicine the way your healthcare provider or pharmacist tells you. Some medicines require refrigeration. **ALWAYS** keep your medicine away from heat, light, and moisture.

Once you have had these ten important questions answered, it is important to follow the suggestions below for maximum benefit from your medications.

- You should always express your concerns to your healthcare provider. Never hesitate to ask questions about your medicine or treatment.
- Always inform your healthcare provider, dentist, and pharmacist of all of the medications you are currently taking when you receive a new prescription. This includes **prescription medications, non-prescription (or Over-the-Counter) medications**, as well as any **vitamins** or **herbal supplements** you may currently take.
- Use the “Educate Before You Medicate” medication record to keep track of all your medicines. Keep a list of all of your prescription and non-prescription medicines including vitamins, herbal supplements, and over-the-counter medicines on this card. See your County Extension Agent for your **free** copy of the “Educate Before You Medicate” record.
- Know what to expect from your new medicine. Ask your healthcare provider, dentist, or pharmacist how soon you can expect to see results and ask what you should do if the medication does not seem to be working.
- Always take the right dose of your medicine on the prescribed schedule. If you experience side effects, contact your healthcare provider or pharmacist. Do not quit taking your medicine unless your healthcare provider has instructed you to stop.

For more information on health issues in Kentucky, please visit:

www.ca.uky.edu/HEEL

Sources:

University of Kentucky College of Pharmacy,
www.mc.uky.edu/Pharmacy/healthinformation.html
National Council on Patient Information and Education,
www.talkaboutrx.org

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March 2004

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OF KENTUCKY
Health Education
through
Extension Leadership

UK UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY
College of Pharmacy

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