

When your doctor hands you a new prescription, it becomes your responsibility to know what the medication is for, how to take it, and what possible side effects might occur. **Here are 10 tips that will help to ensure your safety and understanding the next time you are given a new prescription.**

1 - Know the Name of the Drug & Directions

When your doctor prescribes a new medication for you, have the doctor clearly pronounce the name of the drug and spell it. Write it down on a notepad in your own handwriting. Write down the strength and directions for using the drug in your own handwriting as well. When you are handed the written prescription by the doctor, compare it to your notes and make sure the information matches.

2 - Repeat the Directions

Before you leave your doctor's office, repeat the directions for using the new medication back to your doctor. This will demonstrate that you fully understand how you should be taking the drug. By stating how often you should take it, with food or no food, or any other special directions, you can feel certain you understand. Don't be shy about taking an extra 10 seconds with your doctor for clarification.

3 - Reason for the Prescription

Do you know specifically why your doctor is prescribing this particular medication for you? It's the right time to ask why the doctor chose this drug for you and how the doctor expects you will benefit by using it. Some people don't bother to find out why they are taking a certain prescription. It's your responsibility to ask if you haven't already been told. By knowing the expected benefit, it will help you remain compliant with the medication schedule.

4 - Establish a Time Frame

Discuss a time frame with your doctor. How long before you should expect to notice improvement? What is a reasonable time to wait before giving up on the drug and trying something else? By establishing a plan and real goals, you will be inclined to be compliant with taking the new medication and give it a chance to work.

5 - Ask for Samples

Prescription drugs are expensive. Before investing a lot of money in a drug that may prove to be effective or ineffective - you won't know until you try - ask your doctor if he has samples of the drug. Trial samples will help you decide if the drug is one you want to continue with before laying out your cash.



6 - List of All of Your Medications

Make a complete list of all medications and supplements which you are currently taking. Update your list when medication changes are made. Be sure that all of your doctors and your pharmacist have the most current list of your medications. It is imperative that doctors and pharmacists share the same list so they can be alert to any possible drug interactions or important details about your medications.

7 - Monitoring Drug Effectiveness

Ask your doctor to explain how the effectiveness of the new medication will be monitored. How will your doctor know it is working? Will you need periodic blood tests? It's important for you to fully understand the plan for determining the drug's benefit.

8 - Keep a Symptom Diary

You can help your doctor track your progress by keeping a symptom diary. In a journal, write down the date, times of day you take your medications, how you feel before and after you take them, and make notes of other pertinent details or questions you have formulated. Show your journal/symptom diary to your doctor at your next appointment. It will be much more efficient than trying to recall the details.

9 - Learn About Your Medications

Learn about your medications from excellent drug resources on the Internet. You can look up indications, side effects, interactions, warnings and more. Decisions about your health should be based on knowledge.

10 - Be Realistic About Your Expectations

Even after you know what the medication is expected to do and how long it might take for noticeable improvement to occur, don't expect a miracle. Realize that there are benefits and risks associated with every medication or treatment. Prepare for the next step, along with your doctor, in case you don't respond to the medication in the way that you had hoped. Be compliant with treatment but be open to adapting your treatment plan as needed.