

GETTING THE MOST FROM YOUR MEDICATIONS

It is very important to use your medications the right way. Proper use will help you get the full benefit from your medications, but also reduce your chances of getting side effects or problems that may happen from taking the medications the wrong way.

❖ **Be a part of the decision about your treatment:**

- Ask questions and talk about your concerns with your doctor. Write down questions to ask at your next visit. You can avoid problems later if you ask questions now.
- Bring a friend or family member with you when you go to the doctor. They can help you remember what the doctor said and what questions you want to ask. Having someone along that you trust can help you make better choices, especially if you are not feeling well.
- Ask your doctor what the medication will cost and if your insurance will help pay for it.
- Talk to your pharmacist about the medications you are taking. Ask questions!

❖ **What to do when you get a new prescription:**

- Ask the name of the medication and what it is supposed to do.
- Ask when to take the medication, how much to take, and for how long.
- Ask if there are special instructions or techniques to take it properly.
 - Do you need to shake it first, mix it with liquids, crush it, etc?
- Ask how to store the medication. Does it need refrigeration?
- Ask what side effects might occur and what to do if that happens.
- Ask what food or drinks or other medications you should avoid while taking this medication.
- Ask if you will need refills, and if so, how often?
- Ask what to do in case you miss a dose.
- Ask your doctor how you will know if the medication is working for you. Will you need any other tests done while on this new medication?
- Tell your doctor about any fears or concerns you have about using this new medication.
- Tell your doctor about all the other medications you are taking.
- Tell your doctor if you have any allergies or sensitivities to other medications.
- Tell your doctor what other doctors you are seeing and why.
- Ask your pharmacist to explain what the new medication is for, how to take it properly, and if there are any special things you need to know.

❖ **Storing your new medication:**

- Keep all of your medication in one place. Keep them stored together (unless they need to be kept refrigerated.) This will help in case of an emergency if someone needs to find all of your medications.

- Be sure all medications are kept out of reach of children. This is most important if you have non-childproof containers.
- Do not mix different medications together in one container. This makes it hard to identify your meds in case of an emergency.
- Medications should be stored in a cool, dry place. Most kitchens and bathrooms can get too much heat or moisture and may cause deterioration of your medications.
- Keep any refrigerated medications in a designated container or box away from other items.
- Store oral medications separately from ones used for external use (creams & ointments).
- Check each bottle for the expiration date. Discard any expired medications or those that you are no longer taking. You should discard any medication in a ziplok bag or plastic container filled with kitty litter or used coffee grounds and then place into your household trash receptacle. It is best not to flush medications down the toilets anymore.

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