



talk about your medications

When it comes to medicine, the more you know, the safer you are. One way you can stay informed and help prevent your medications from doing more harm than good is talking to your doctor. If you are currently taking medication, here are a few questions you may want to ask your doctor during your next visit to ensure you're taking them correctly:

WHY DO I NEED TO TAKE THIS MEDICATION?

Keep a list of your medications in your wallet or purse and update the information with each new prescription. This is important, especially if you're seeing more than one doctor. Review your list to confirm what each medication is for, why you're taking it and exactly how you should be taking it.

DO I NEED TO BE ON THIS MEDICATION INDEFINITELY OR CAN I STOP TAKING IT?

Many people continue to take a medication they no longer need simply because no one told them to stop. There may be medications that are no longer necessary or some that could have been discontinued. Plus, as people age, the way their body uses and breaks down drugs changes. As a result, some drugs that have worked fine for a long time may start to cause problems; however, only your doctor can truly evaluate this for you.

WILL THIS MEDICATION INTERACT WITH SOMETHING ELSE I'M TAKING?

Before taking any drug, you should always ask if it's safe to take with your other medications. Drug interactions and double dosing are serious issues. For example, taking certain over-the-counter drugs and prescription medications at the same time can be very dangerous.

ARE THERE OTHER WAYS I CAN TREAT MY CONDITION INSTEAD OF TAKING THIS MEDICATION?

A no-cost lifestyle change, such as eating healthier or exercising regularly, can control certain conditions just as well as a drug. Even with an illness as simple as a cold, drinking fluids and getting rest may be a healthier approach than relying on medication.

IS THERE A SAFE, LESS-EXPENSIVE ALTERNATIVE TO THIS MEDICATION?

Don't hesitate to ask if there's a way you can save money on your prescription costs while still meeting your needs. There are often less expensive generic drug options available that are as safe and effective as brand-name products. For example, there are several types of medications called statins that lower cholesterol. These generic alternatives cost much less than the brand-name products and lower cholesterol very effectively.

Remember, doctors are there to ensure their patients' safety. Don't be afraid to talk to your doctor if a medication doesn't seem to be working or you have problems making a decision concerning the use of your medication.

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five ways to lower your prescription costs

Prescription medications can help you maintain your health and prevent chronic conditions, but can also be very expensive. Even with prescription coverage, if you're on more than one drug, your monthly costs can add up quickly. Here are a few ideas to help you keep your prescription costs in check while getting the care you need from your medications:

- 1. Speak to your doctor.** If you are unsure about a medication you are taking or don't think it is working for you, be sure to let your doctor know. Keeping your doctor informed is key to ensuring you receive the most appropriate, effective care. And if something isn't working for you, he or she may be able to recommend an alternative course of action, which could save you money.
- 2. Use generic drugs.** Many brand-name drugs have generic alternatives that are as safe and effective as the brand-name but at a lower cost. Even drugs that do not have a direct generic alternative may be in a class of drugs that do. For example, there are several generic medications that lower cholesterol that can be used instead of higher priced brand-name drugs. Ask your doctor about alternative medications and check if they're covered by your health plan.
- 3. Ask about tablet splitting.** Some medications with different strengths cost the same: one lower strength tablet costs the same as the higher strength dose. By splitting the higher strength in half, you will get two doses for the price of one, saving you money. Not all medications should be split in half. Check with your doctor or health plan.
- 4. Try an over-the-counter medication.** Several drugs that used to be available by prescription have been approved by the Food and Drug Administration to be sold over-the-counter. Sometimes, they cost less.
- 5. Make lifestyle changes.** Eating healthy and exercising on a regular basis may delay the need for medication for some conditions (e.g., high cholesterol, hypertension, acid reflux, etc.), as well as help the medication you are on work more effectively. Talk to your doctor about what lifestyle changes you can make.

As always, please check with your health care professional about your medication needs.

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