



FROM YOUR PROVIDER, FOR YOUR HEALTH MANAGING YOUR MEDS

If you find yourself needing to take more than a few medications a day, the process of keeping your dosing schedule straight can be challenging. Potential problems include losing the benefit the medication is providing, overdosing, problems caused by combining medications at the wrong time and problems associated with taking the medications with or without food.

Organization is the Key to Keeping Track of Your Medications.

A. The Pill Organizer

A pill organizer can be very helpful if you take different types of medications daily. These have compartments representing every day of the week and the compartments should be large enough to hold all the medications for each day in. This device, coupled with a dosage schedule will help you avoid mistakes.

B. The Dosage Schedule

Make a chart, by hand or with a spreadsheet program that includes a list all medications, the times they need to be taken, and check box by each so you can mark the chart when each medication has been taken. For meds that are prescribed "as needed," you may also want to include why you decided to take it. Along with the daily charts, include a separate list of all your medications including the name, dosage, frequency, side effects and a description of the medication (like "little pink oval pill" or "large blue pill").

C. Check Prescription Labels Often

When looking at prescription labels, check the expiration date and refill information. When running low on a medication that has a refill, call your pharmacist before you run out. Never remove the last pill from a bottle until a refill has arrived. Medications, especially generics, look alike, also mistakes in filling prescriptions, although rare, do happen. Always double check your prescriptions to make sure what you think they are. If you need a refill on a medication that has no refills left, call your doctor's office as soon as possible, to allow time for processing.

D. A Pill Reminder Device

There are electronic pill reminders that you can buy at your drug store. You input the name of the medication, how often you take it, and if you take it with food. An alert will go off reminding you what medication needs to be taken.

E. A Couple of Final Thoughts

Fill all prescriptions at the same pharmacy. This is especially important for patients seeing multiple medical specialists, all of whom are issuing prescriptions. Pharmacists have databases that search for drug interactions and other possible complications. Some pharmacies may also offer special pill packaging where they pre-group your meds together. Ask your pharmacist.

Get in the habit of rotating your pharmaceutical stock, using the oldest medications first. If a medication is expired, make sure you discard it properly.