

## Module 5

# Me and My Medications



### **In this module, you can find information about:**

1. Understanding my medication
2. Understanding my prescription label
3. Medication safety
4. What to do if there is a problem
5. What did I learn?

# 1. Understanding My Medication

Medication is another word for medicine. Medications may help you to feel better or get well. There are many kinds of medications.

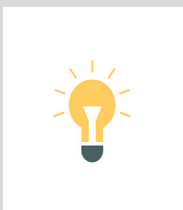
Before starting medication, you can ask your doctor or pharmacist:

- What is the medication for?
- What will it do?
- What could the side effects be and what to do if I experience any?
- How do I take it, how long do I take it for, and how often do I take it?
- Is there another way to get better, with or without medication?
- How much will it cost?
- Are there lower-cost medicines I can choose?

Then, you can make the best health decision for you.



The pharmacist can answer any other questions you may have.



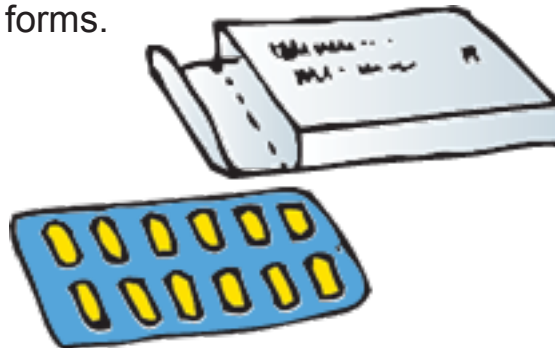
**Remember:**

Tell your doctor about everything you take. For example, vitamins, natural supplements, or any medicine you purchased from the store.

Tell your doctor about any allergies you have.

## 2. Understanding My Prescription Label

Medications come in many forms. They may be creams, liquids, drops, pills, inhalers, or other forms.



### Reading the Prescription Label:

Once you get your prescription filled, you will typically find the following information on the label:

- Pharmacy's name, address, and telephone number
- Prescription number (each prescription has its own number)
- Date prescription is filled
- Your name
- Instructions for taking the medication
- Numbers of allowed or required refills
- Expiration date
- Doctor's name that prescribed the medication

This information may vary depending on the pharmacy filling your prescription.



Your pharmacist can give you good information about taking medication. They can print out specifics about individual medications you take. This helps you keep track of things.

### 3. Medication Safety

Read the label on your prescription to make sure you are following the directions.

The following are important things to know for being safe while taking your medications:

- **Take the right amount of medication and dose:** Taking the correct medication and dose of medication is very important. Dosages are given to make sure the medication does its job correctly. Taking too much or too little of your medication may make you feel worse. Do not change the amount of medication you take unless your doctor tells you to.
- **Side Effects:** Medications sometimes have side effects. These can vary from person to person. Know if the side effects you are experiencing are typical, or if you are having a bad reaction. If you are having a reaction call your doctor immediately to see what they want you to do.
- **Take your medications on time:** You can set a timer, leave yourself a written reminder, or ask your support person to remind you. You can also use a medication box to help organize your pills for the correct time and day.
- **What if you forget to take my medication?** If you don't know the answer, contact your doctor to find out.
- **Sharing Medications:** Never share medications with others or take other's medications. Not only is this illegal, it can be dangerous for your health.
- **Storing Your Medications:** Every medicine has a proper way that it should be stored. Some may need to be refrigerated, and some can be kept in a cabinet. Ask your doctor or pharmacist for proper storage instructions.
- **Keeping a List of Your Medications:** In case of an emergency, it is important to have a list including ALL medications and any other medical information that someone needs in case of an emergency.



## 9 Tips to Help Remind You When to Take Your Medications

Taking your medications the correct way and time very important. If you miss a dose it is best to call your doctor to make sure you can take it.

Sometimes we need some help to remember to take our medications on time. Here are some ways to help us remember to take the right medications at the correct time.

- 1 Keep a list of all your medications.** This includes ones that you get over-the-counter. You can keep these in a notebook or in your smartphone.
- 2 Be sure and take your medications at the same time every day.** You may take them with or after breakfast, before brushing your teeth, before lunch, maybe even before bedtime.
- 3 Set a timer.** This can be done with an alarm on your smartphone, watch, or computer.
- 4 Leave reminder notes .** You can do this with sticky notes or by keeping a calendar with times and days you need to take your medications.
- 5 Turn your bottle upside down.** You can remind yourself that you have taken the medication by turning your bottle upside down after you have taken it. At the end of the day you can see if you took your medications.
- 6 Count your pills.** If you know how many you have left, it may be easier to remember if you took them or if you have missed a dose.
- 7 Have someone remind you.** You can have a friend, support person, family member, or roommate help remind you when to take your medications.
- 8 Use a pill box.** This is great to use if you have to take multiple medications. You may need a pill box for morning, mid-day, and/or evening, depending on when you need to take your medications.
- 9 You can sign up for a text, call, or e-mail reminder service.**  
To sign up for a program like this, you can enter your phone number along with your medication schedule with a reminder service program. Some of these services are free and some charge a fee so make sure you know before you sign up.

## 4. What to Do if There is a Problem

Taking the right medications helps you get better.

But sometimes they might not be right for you.

It can take time to find the right kind of medication.

When you start a new medication, it helps to let someone besides your doctor know. They can help you watch for any changes.



**Some signs of medication problems are:**

- Throwing up (vomiting)
- Getting a rash on your skin
- Not thinking straight
- Sweating
- Feeling too sleepy
- Speaking too slow or fast

**911**

## 5. What Did I Learn?

### I can take charge of my health care when I:

- Know what my medications are and understand the information written on my prescription.
- Understand how the medication can help me and what the side effects may be.
- Know the right way to take my medications and properly keep them stored.
- Know what to do when there is a problem.
- Know who to ask for more information.

### Notes:

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This module was adapted from NSW Council for Intellectual Disabilities (2009), Australia.

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