

MEDICATION QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR DOCTOR

Medications can be very helpful in controlling chronic diseases like hypertension (high blood pressure), destroying bacteria that cause infection, and relieving pain and other symptoms. Whenever you get a prescription, there are questions you should ask your doctor and pharmacist.

1. What is the brand name and generic name of this drug?
2. What is the dosage? Is this the average dosage?
3. What is this medication supposed to do for me?
4. What are the common side effects of this medication?
5. Are there any serious side effects that may happen? What precautions should I take to prevent them?
6. Will this drug interact with any other drug that I am taking?
7. Are there any drugs or foods I should not take with this medicine, including alcohol, caffeine, tobacco, herbal remedies or over-the-counter drugs?
8. How long must I take this drug before it is effective? (Some drugs take weeks before their full effect can be realized.)
9. How often should I take this drug? What should I do if I miss a dose?
10. How long should I take this drug? (Some drugs, like antibiotics, must be taken until they are gone, even if your symptoms disappear and you feel well. Otherwise the infection may reoccur or the bacteria causing it may become resistant to the medication.)

You should also find out if the drug has been used successfully for five years or more, or if it is a new one. New drugs may have unknown side effects that are sometimes dangerous. Unless there is a special reason to take a new drug when an old one will accomplish the same thing, it is usually safer (and cheaper) to ask for the drug that has proved itself to be safe and effective during the past five years.

If the drug your doctor prescribes is not effective for you, or has unpleasant side effects, let your doctor know. Another medication may be available that will be helpful for your condition. It is essential that our health care providers listen to us and answer our questions. It is important to ask questions in order to protect our health and safety.

