



## GET THE MOST FROM YOUR MEDICINES

Modern medicines can do wonderful things. They can cure diseases and help us live longer, healthier lives. But they only work if they are taken properly. When they are misused, these powerful tools can cause serious harm.

As we age, we are more likely to take multiple medications, and this increases the potential for missed doses, incorrectly taken medicines, and drug interactions.

The following tips will help you get the most benefit from your medicines and reduce the chances of having problems.

### **Prescription Medicines**

Whenever your doctor prescribes a new medication for you, make sure you understand how to take it properly.

- Know when to take it. For example, should you take it once a day or more often? Should it be taken at a particular time of day—such as in the morning or before bedtime?

- Know how much to take. One tablet or more? A teaspoonful or a tablespoonful? Remember, the spoons that come with silverware are not accurate measurements of teaspoons and tablespoons. Your Medical Pharmacies Pharmacist can provide you with a more accurate measuring device.
- Know whether you should take your medicine with food or on an empty stomach. Some medicines don't work well if taken with food, and others shouldn't be taken on an empty stomach. Even some drugs that should be taken with food should not be taken with certain foods. For example, milk and other dairy products can interfere with how some common drugs work.
- Know how long you should take the medicine for. Should you stop when you start to feel better? Should you take it until all of the medicine in the bottle is gone? Is it a medication that you will need to keep taking for a long time?

Always follow the prescription instructions on the label carefully. If there is anything at all that you don't understand about your medication or how to take it, your Medical Pharmacies Pharmacist can explain it to you.



### **Over-the-counter (OTC) Medicines**

When you take an OTC health product—and this includes supplements and natural remedies as well as nonprescription drugs—it is important to read the label carefully.

- Read the dosing instructions and follow them exactly.
- Check the ingredients. Some ingredients in OTC products can interfere with the way prescription medicines work. In some cases, different OTC drugs can contain the same ingredients, so you can end up taking unsafe



amounts if you take more than one product—even if you are careful about following the dosing instructions for each product. Sometimes manufacturers change the formulation of a product, and the only way to know that the product has changed is by reading the label. Always check with your Medical Pharmacies Pharmacist if you are unsure about anything to do with your medicines.

- Pay attention to the warning sections on the package. Some OTC medicines shouldn't be taken by people with certain health conditions.

Your Medical Pharmacies Pharmacist will be happy to answer any questions you have and to help you select the OTC products that are right for you.

### ***Taking Your Medications***

It is important to take your prescription medicines exactly as prescribed and to take all OTC medicines according to the directions on the package unless your doctor gives you different instructions. That means taking every dose, taking it correctly, and taking it on time. There are some things that you can do to help you remember.

One way is to link your doses to things you normally do during the day, such as taking your morning dose right after brushing your teeth or making your nighttime dose part of your bedtime routine.

Another option is to talk to your Medical Pharmacies Pharmacist about compliance packaging, a way of delivering your solid medications (tablets or capsules) so that they are organized by the times you should take them.

Your Medical Pharmacies Pharmacist will be happy to help you come up with ways to make taking your medications safer and easier.

### ***Your Medication Review***

As we age, our body changes—and that includes the way it absorbs medicine. This is just one of the reasons why you should ask your Medical Pharmacies Pharmacist about having an annual medication review. This review will give your pharmacist the opportunity to sit down with you for a personal discussion about all of the medicines you take to see if any adjustments need to be made. During this conversation you can also ask your Medical Pharmacies Pharmacist to explain anything you don't understand about your medicines.

### ***What You Should Know about Your Medicines***

There is some basic information you should have about each of the medicines you take. You should know:

- What is the name of the medicine?
- What is this medicine used for?
- What dose should you take?
- How many times a day should you take the medicine and at what times?
- Should it be taken on an empty stomach or with food?
- Are there any foods or drinks that you should avoid while taking this medicine (including alcohol)?
- Are there any other prescription medicines, OTC drugs, or health products that you should avoid while on this medicine?
- How long will it take the medicine to work?
- How long should you continue to take it for?
- What should you do if you miss a dose?
- What side effects might the medicine cause?
- What should you do if you experience any side effects?

If you don't know the answers to these questions, speak with your Medical Pharmacies Pharmacist.

