

Safe Use of Medicines

Medicines are used to treat diseases, manage conditions, and relieve symptoms. Medicines are generally safe when used as your doctor states or as directed on the label, but there are risks with taking any medicine. Each year, many people end up in the hospital because of errors with medicine use. Knowing what medicine you are taking, the reasons why you are taking them, and taking them the right way can help you use medicine safely.

What Are Medicines?

Medicines, often referred to as drugs can be:

- **Prescriptions**
 - What you can get only with a doctor's order (for example, pills to lower your blood pressure or an asthma inhaler)
- **Over-The-Counter (OTC) Pills, Liquids, or Creams**
 - What you buy without a prescription (for example, pills for headaches or tablets for heartburn)
- **Vitamins, Eye Drops, or Dietary Supplements**



Make sure your doctor and the dialysis clinic team know about ALL the medicines you take. This includes those prescribed by other doctors, as well as vitamins, supplements, herbal remedies, and over-the-counter drugs you use every now and then. Your clinic will do regular medicine checks, asking you to bring in your medicines to make sure they have all your current medicines in your medical chart.



Questions to Ask About Your Medicines

Ask your doctor these questions about your current or any new medicines they want you to take:

- 1.** What is the name of the medicine and what will it help treat?
- 2.** How much of the medicine should I take, how often, and for how long?
- 3.** How long will it take this medicine to work?
- 4.** What should I do if I miss a dose?
- 5.** What are the side effects and when should I call you about them?
- 6.** Can I safely mix this medicine with the vitamins and OTC drugs I am taking?

Tips For Getting The Best Results From Your Medicines

Check labels

- Check the label on the medicine before taking it to make sure it is for you.

Tips For Getting The Best Results From Your Medicines (cont.)

Keep a List

- Write down the names of all prescription drugs and any vitamins, remedies, or OTC drugs you are taking.
- Write down the doctor who prescribed it and when.
- Write down the amount you take, when you take it, and if you take it with food.
- Keep it up-to-date: Add new medicines and remove ones you no longer take.
- Keep two copies of the list: one on the refrigerator door or medicine cabinet and one in your wallet or purse
- Visit and review monthly with the dialysis staff.

Take The Medicines the Right Way

- Take the medicine in the exact amount (never more or less) listed on the label.
- Take the medicine at the time listed on the label.
- Do not stop taking a medicine unless your doctor says it is okay – even if you are feeling better.
- Do not break or crush your pills unless your doctor or pharmacist says it is okay. If swallowing pills is hard for you, ask if there is a liquid option.

Learn About Side Effects

- Read and save any written information that comes with the medicine.

- Talk to your doctor or pharmacist if you have any questions about the information.
- Call your doctor right away if you are having side effects.

Play It Safe

- Tell your doctor and pharmacist if you have allergies to any medicines.
- Do not give friends or family members medicine meant for you.
- Do not take medicine prescribed for others.
- Do not drink any beer, wine, or hard liquor while you are taking a medicine unless your doctor says it is okay.
- Do not take any medicine that is expired.
- Keep all medicines out of sight and reach of children and away from pets.
- Get refills early enough so you do not run out.
- Fill your prescriptions at the same pharmacy since they keep track of everything ordered.

Ask Your Care Team:

- Do you have a current list of all the medicine I take?
- Could I have a copy to keep?
- Are there medicines that I should hold before dialysis?

For more information or to file a grievance, please contact:

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Source: https://order.nia.nih.gov/sites/default/files/2019-01/Safe-Use-of-Medicines_508.pdf
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23.ESRD12.213