



How Do I Manage My Medicines?

Taking medicine may be new to you, and there may be a lot to remember. For example, why are you taking it? What time should you take it? How often do you take it, and how many pills do you take?

It's very important to take medicine the right way — just as your doctor tells you.

If you don't follow your doctor's directions, what could happen? First of all, if medicine isn't taken the right way, it may not work. It could also cause side effects that may be mild — or very harmful. Without knowing it, you could counteract one medicine by taking it with another. Not taken properly, medicine can also make you feel sick or dizzy.



How can I remember to take my medicine?

- Take it at the same time each day along with other daily events, like brushing your teeth.
- Use a weekly pill box with separate sections for each day or time of day. Computerized pill boxes can alert you when it's time to take a pill or order refills.
- Ask family and friends to help remind you.
- Use a pill calendar or drug reminder chart.
- Leave notes to remind yourself.
- Try e-mail or text message services.
- Wear a wristwatch with an alarm.
- Use your smart phone calendar and alarm.

What else should I know?

- Ask your doctor or pharmacist when to take your medicines and if they can be taken with foods.

- Store your medicine the way your doctor or pharmacist tells you. Keep medicine in original containers, or label new containers.
- Keep track of what pills you can and can't take together, including over-the-counter medicines.
- Always get your prescription filled on time, so you don't run out.
- Try to see the same pharmacist each time.
- Don't take more of your medicine than the prescribed dose.
- Ask your doctor or pharmacist before buying a new over-the-counter medicine, such as an antihistamine, "cold tablets" or vitamin supplements to be sure they won't interfere with your prescribed medicine.
- Always check with your doctor before you stop taking a medicine.

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- If you have any questions about your pills, make a note to remind yourself to ask your doctor or pharmacist.
- Tell your doctor and pharmacist if you have any side effects.
- Write down the names and doses of medicines you are taking. If you go to more than one doctor, take your updated medication list with you to each visit.
- Keep all medicines out of the reach of children and pets.

My Medicines — Ask your healthcare providers to help you complete the chart below.

NAME OF MEDICINE	WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE	WHAT MY DOSAGE IS	WHAT IT'S FOR	WHEN TO TAKE IT	NAME OF DOCTOR

HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?

- 1 Call **1-800-AHA-USA1** (1-800-242-8721), or visit **heart.org** to learn more about heart disease and stroke.
- 2 Sign up to get *Heart Insight*, a free magazine for heart patients and their families, at **heartinsight.org**.
- 3 Connect with others sharing similar journeys with heart disease and stroke by joining our Support Network at **heart.org/supportnetwork**.

Do you have questions for the doctor or nurse?

Take a few minutes to write your questions for the next time you see your healthcare provider.

For example:

How long should I take my medicine?

What if I forget to take a medicine?

My Questions:

We have many other fact sheets to help you make healthier choices to reduce your risk, manage disease or care for a loved one. Visit **heart.org/answersbyheart** to learn more.

