
a series of fact sheets written
by experts in the field of liver
disease

**Newer Version
Available.
Click Here**

Being an Effective Healthcare Consumer: Medication Guidelines

Lucinda Porter, RN

Know the following about your medications:

- Generic and brand names of medication
 - Reason you are taking the medication
 - The dose of the medication
 - The frequency you should take the medication
 - The time of day you should be taking your medication
 - If it will interact with any other medications or supplements you are taking
 - If you should take it with or without food
 - If you should avoid anything while taking it, such as alcohol, grapefruit juice, drugs, certain foods or activities
 - The length of time you will need to take this medication
 - The drug's expiration date
 - The storage instructions for the medication
 - The major risks and side effects
 - If these risks or side effects are common
 - If there are side effects, ways to manage these
 - If any side effects should be reported or that may be potentially urgent
- How soon you should expect to see results
 - What to do if you are late or miss a dose
 - How to refill the medication
 - How many days before you run out should you request a refill
 - What this medication will cost you
 - Where to get more information about this medication

Guidelines for Managing Medications Safely:

1. Ask your medical provider if there are ways you can care for yourself that do not require medications, surgery, or any invasive procedures.
2. Understand the exact instructions for taking your medication. Make sure these exactly match the prescription label. If the two instructions are not identical, clarify this before taking the medication.
3. Know the medication's side effects before you start taking it.
4. When a medication is newly prescribed, ask if there are any medications or foods that should not be mixed with it.
5. Take the minimum effective prescribed dose.
6. Take medication with a full glass of water unless otherwise directed.
7. Never break, crush, or dissolve a pill, tablet, or capsule without making sure this is all right to do. Some medications need to be intact so they are not destroyed by stomach acids. If you have difficulty swallowing pills tell your medical provider.
8. Do not take medication in the dark or without your glasses if you need them to read the label.
9. For liquid medications, use standard measuring spoons rather than eating utensils.
10. Try to take your medications on time. Find out what you are supposed to do if you are late or miss a dose. Never double up on a dose unless you are given clear instructions to do so.

11. If you have trouble remembering to take medication, ask a pharmacist, nurse or other health provider for tips. Calendars, alarms, computer reminders, notes and daily pill cases can provide reminders.

12. Do not take a medication that has expired, smells or looks odd to you. This is especially important for liquid medications.

13. If you pick up a prescription and the medication looks different from the last time you took it, talk to your pharmacist to make sure there has not been an error.

14. If you did not take the medication as prescribed, tell your medical provider.

15. Do not use someone else's medication or give your medication to anyone else.

16. Keep medications in their original container with a secure cap.

17. Store medications as directed.

18. If you are traveling by air, carry-on medications with you in the cabin. Keep them in their original containers with the prescription label.

19. Do not leave medications in a hot car.

20. Keep medications away from children's reach.

21. If you are or may be pregnant, tell your provider this before you take any medication. Also mention if you are breastfeeding.

22. If you are hospitalized or in a position where someone else gives you your medication, look at what you are taking before you take it. If something doesn't look right, ask for clarification or assurance.

23. If you think you are having an allergic reaction to a medication, seek immediate medical help.



Be Sure to Check Out the Other Factheets in This Series

Being an Effective Healthcare Consumer:

- Calling your Healthcare Provider
- Choosing a Healthcare Provider
- Maximizing Your Medical Appointments
- The Medical Alphabet
- Medical Appointments
- Tips for Lowering Prescription Drug Costs
- Your Medical History

For more information about hepatitis C, hepatitis B and HCV coinfections, please visit www.hcvadvocate.org.

• hcspFACTsheet •

A publication of the Hepatitis C Support Project

Executive Director

Editor-in-Chief, HCSP Publications

Alan Franciscus

Design

Paula Fener

Production

C.D. Mazoff, PhD

Contact information:

Hepatitis C Support Project
PO Box 427037
San Francisco, CA 94142-7037

alanfranciscus@hcvadvocate.org

The information in this fact sheet is designed to help you understand and manage HCV and is not intended as medical advice. All persons with HCV should consult a medical practitioner for diagnosis and treatment of HCV.

This information is provided by the Hepatitis C Support Project • a nonprofit organization for HCV education, support and advocacy • © 2007 Hepatitis C Support Project • Reprint permission is granted and encouraged with credit to the Hepatitis C Support Project.

