

## **It's important to know what to take, when to take it and how to take it correctly.**

As our health needs change during life, it's not uncommon to take many kinds of medications. This is especially true for individuals with diabetes. Different prescription medications treat different problems. They come in many forms and are taken in a variety of ways and at specific times.

People living with diabetes may take insulin injections, medications that enable the body to use its own natural insulin more easily or a combination of both. Other medications are sometimes prescribed to treat conditions related to diabetes, such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, or even depression.

It can be easy to mix up medications if you take several kinds at different times — especially if they look alike or their names sound similar. You should have a clear understanding of every prescription medication and supplement you take.

By following the advice in this guide, you can achieve better control of your health to stay active and independent.

## **Straight talk about managing medications. The right dose at the right time.**

### *What is a medication profile? Why should I have one?*

A medication profile is a list of every medication you currently take. It will be helpful to your doctor and diabetes healthcare team in helping you manage your diabetes. Your medication profile should contain:

- Name of prescription medication.
- Strength (as in milligrams).
- Dosage form (pill or liquid).
- Directions for use (number of times per day; if you take it with or before a meal, etc.).
- Reason why you take the medication.
- When you started taking it.
- Name of the doctor who prescribed it.
- Any over-the-counter pills and supplements you take.

### *How should I use my medication profile?*

Show the list every time you visit your doctor or healthcare team. Keep it up-to-date so that they have the most current information about your health.

- If your doctor starts you on a new medication, ask if there is any medication that you should stop taking.
- If you wish to save money at the pharmacy, ask if any of your current or new prescriptions are available in generic form because generics have the same active ingredient of their brand counterparts but often cost less.
- If you have trouble following or remembering the dosage schedule, tell your doctor, who might be able to change the medication plan to make it easier for you.
- Lifestyle changes, especially with meals or activities, may affect medications or dosages. So, be sure to tell your doctor about them.

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*Who can assist me in understanding my medications?*

It's important to know why you are taking each medication, and how to use each one correctly and safely. Your doctor is the first person to discuss any questions you may have. Your diabetes care team and your pharmacist are also good sources of information and advice.

*How can I remember to take my medications?*

Here are some tips that many people with diabetes find helpful:

- Use a pill container with compartments for each day of the week, filling the pillbox at the beginning of the week.
- If you take medications more than once a day, use a separate pill box for each time of the day; one for morning, one for noontime, etc.
- Make it a habit to take your medications along with a common daily activity, such as brushing your teeth before bedtime.
- Keep a written record of each time you take your dose of each medication, so that you don't accidentally re-take your medication or worry that you missed a dose.
- Understand why each medication is important to your health, which can motivate you to make them a regular activity of your daily schedule.

*How can I help make sure my medications work for me?*

- Always take the exact amount prescribed.
- Stay as close as possible to the scheduled dosage times.
- Do not mix medications with alcohol.
- Call your healthcare provider if you have any unpleasant or unusual reactions to a medication.
- Throw away medications that have expired.

*What should I know when I receive a new prescription?*

Before you leave your doctor's office, ask enough questions to make sure you understand your new medication. If you are confused about something, ask for it to be explained in simpler terms. You should know:

- Name of the medication and what it treats.
- When you should take it and what to do if you miss a dose.
- What foods or beverages you should avoid while taking this medication.
- What the possible side effects are, and what to do if they occur.

*How can my pharmacist help me?*

Your pharmacist can be a valuable source of information about each prescription medication you take. Get or learn the following when you fill your prescriptions:

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- Written information about the medication.
- The most important thing to know about the prescription.
- How to take the medication.
- Any tests or monitoring required when you are on this medication.

**Always remember that knowledge is powerful medicine.**

Your healthcare team wants you to be an active participant in managing your diabetes and any other condition you may have. Sharing information will make this process easier.

**Top 10 Medication DOs and DON'Ts**

**Do...** Take medications exactly as prescribed and read all cautions.

**Do...** Keep a current list of prescribed and over-the-counter medications, doses, and reasons for taking.

**Do...** Use a weekly or daily pill organizer to ensure you take the right dose at the right time.

**Do...** Keep medications in their original containers except for those you put in an organizer. The labels contain important information such as the dosage, expiration date, storage recommendations, and doctor's name.

**Do...** Dispose of medications that your doctor has told you to discontinue or that have expired.

**Don't...** Be afraid to tell your doctor if you have trouble taking medications as prescribed.

**Don't...** Take medications prescribed for someone else.

**Don't...** Stop a prescribed medication without checking with your doctor.

**Don't...** Be afraid to ask for easy-open tops.

**Don't...** Forget to tell your doctor and pharmacist about all of your food and drug allergies.

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**Web site:** [www.RxSolutions.com/diabetes](http://www.RxSolutions.com/diabetes)

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