

Control



appointment. When you are prescribed a new medication, ask your doctor or pharmacist the following questions:

- What is the name and dose of the medicine?
- What is the drug supposed to do?
- Does this drug replace another medication I am currently taking?
- Is it okay to substitute a less-expensive generic medicine for the name brand? Will it achieve the same effect?
- When exactly should I take this medication? Morning or evening? With or without food or drink?
- Are there foods, drinks (including alcoholic beverages), other medicines or activities I should avoid while taking this medicine?
- For women, do hormones impact the effectiveness of this medication?
- What are the possible side effects? What should I do if they occur?
- How long will I need to take this medication? Do I need to take all refills?
- What should I do if I miss a dose?
- What should I do if I accidentally take more than the recommended dose?

- Do I need to take all of this medication, or can I stop taking it once I feel better? (Note: take all antibiotics you are prescribed, even if you start feeling better.)
- Can I stop taking this medication “cold turkey,” or do I need to slowly reduce usage of the drug?

During your treatment, consider scheduling a follow-up visit to your physician, who can monitor your progress. Make sure you tell him or her:

- If you have any questions about your prescription.
- If you are having any problems with your prescription.
- Any side effects or problems since you started taking the prescription.
- Any new prescriptions that another doctor may have prescribed and any over-the-counter medicines that you started taking since your last visit.
- How you are feeling since starting the medication.

It is important to take an active role in your health care by working with your doctor, nurse and pharmacist to learn as much as possible about your prescriptions. Remember, taking the best care of your health is vital to your future — the future of your health and your wallet.

The single most important way you can stay healthy is to be an active member of your own health care team. Part of your responsibility is to find information about how medications may be used to treat your medical conditions.

SouthCarolinaBlues.com



South Carolina

BlueCross BlueShield of South Carolina is an independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association



South Carolina

BlueCross BlueShield of South Carolina is an independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association

Control

Understanding the importance your medications play in your treatment will help you get the most benefits from your prescriptions.

Controlling Prescription Drug Costs

Ever been surprised at the pharmacy counter by the cost of a drug? You can take several important steps *before* you arrive at the pharmacy. These steps will help you avoid surprises. The first step is to understand how your prescription drug benefits work. The next step is to be sure you are receiving the best medicine for your condition.

Here are some ways you can take control of your medication costs:

- Speak with your doctor about trying an over-the-counter medicine to treat your ailment.
- If a prescription is needed, ask your doctor to prescribe a medication with a generic equivalent. Be sure to request the generic at the pharmacy.
- If your doctor prescribes a medication without a generic equivalent, ask him or her about another drug in the same class with a generic that may be just as effective.
- Always use an in-network pharmacy.
- Show the pharmacist your member ID card during each visit. This simple step can help ensure you pay the lowest amount. It can help you avoid harmful drug interactions. It also can ensure you receive the right dosage and the best advice on the use of each medicine.
- Check your health plan's prior authorization list to ensure your benefits will cover the medication you need when you need it. If a drug appears on the list, then your doctor needs to contact your health plan for authorization before you fill the prescription.

Tips for Taking Medicines Safely

Using the following checklist will help you avoid medication errors. Simple checks could save your life.

- Keep an up-to-date list of all the medications you are taking. Include all prescription and over-the-counter medicines, sleep aids, vitamins and herbal supplements that you use. Show the list to your physician and ask if each drug is still necessary.
- Try to use the same pharmacy to buy all of your medicines so your prescription records will be located in one place. Take your list of medications to the pharmacy, especially if you must fill prescriptions at different stores.
- Take the list with you to the hospital if you need inpatient or outpatient services.
- Ask questions about your medicines, and make sure you understand the answers. This understanding is particularly important with any new medication your doctor prescribes.
- When you pick up your prescription, make sure your medicine is exactly what your doctor prescribed. Ask the pharmacist any questions you may have.
- Read the directions on the prescription label carefully. Have the pharmacist or doctor explain anything you do not understand.
- Most pharmacies provide information sheets about each drug. Be sure to carefully read all drug information provided by your doctor or pharmacy.
- Ask about possible side effects, and understand which ones are serious. Call your doctor right away if you have a serious or lasting side effect.
- Be sure to tell your health care professionals if you have medicine allergies or if you ever had problems when taking a medicine before.

- If your doctor writes your prescription by hand, make sure you can read it. If you can't read your doctor's handwriting, your pharmacist might not be able to, either.
- Use a container or medication calendar to track each time you take your medication. This tracking is important to ensure you don't take your medicine more or less frequently than prescribed. If you have trouble organizing your medications, ask a friend, family member or trustworthy neighbor to help.
- Inform your doctor and pharmacist if you are pregnant, nursing or may become pregnant.
- If you need surgery or a procedure, ask if and how soon you should stop taking your medications beforehand.

By taking the time to ask questions now, you can avoid problems later. Visit our Web site for more information about prescription drugs, including costs, generic equivalents, drug interactions and side effects.

Stick with the Plan

Carrying out the doctor's treatment plan is critical to your health. But closely following the plan isn't always easy. The medication may cause side effects. Or you may feel better and want to stop before finishing your medicine. Strictly following the plan is important. Discuss with your doctor any problems or concerns you have about taking your medications exactly as prescribed.

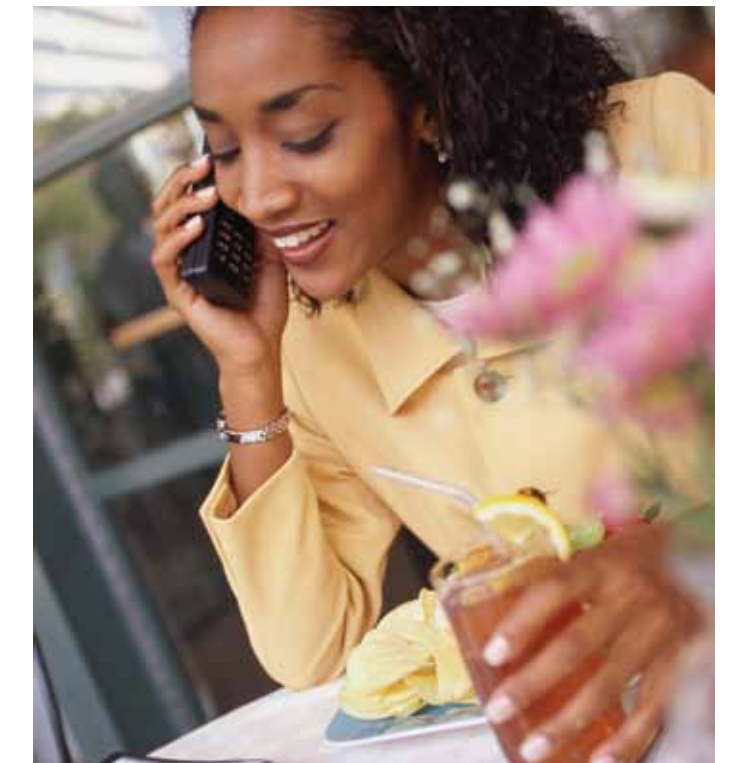
Here are some tips for sticking with the plan:

- If you experience side effects or have other concerns, tell your doctor right away. You may be able to take a different amount or different type of medicine.
- Take all the antibiotics you were prescribed. If you are taking an antibiotic to fight an infection, it is important to take all of your medicine for as many days as your doctor prescribed, even if you feel better.

- Ask your doctor if your prescription needs to be refilled. If you take medicine for high blood pressure or to lower your cholesterol, you may need to use your medicine for a long time.
- Your medicine was prescribed only for you. Never give your prescription medicine to somebody else. Never take prescription medicine that wasn't prescribed for you, even if you have the same medical condition as the person for whom it was prescribed.
- Ask whether you need blood tests, X-rays or other lab tests to find out if the medicine is working. Blood tests also can reveal if the medication is causing any problems. Ask your doctor to tell you what the test results showed.

Tips for Using Prescription Drugs

Many people are harmed, some seriously, each year by taking the wrong medicine or not taking the medicine correctly. Write down your questions in advance and take them to your



understand your prescriptions
visit SouthCarolinaBlues.com