

MEDICAL PRESCRIPTION TIPS

Practical tips and questions to ask once a decision is made to prescribe a medication:

- Clarify the dose, the number of times taken daily and the name of the medication in case there is confusion on the part of the pharmacist or doctor.
- If a doctor is prescribing a 3-4 times a day medication ask if there is another prescription that is equally as effective but given only once or twice a day, thus reducing chance of forgetting to give medication;
- Indicate what type of medication is best for your child (i.e. if they cannot swallow pills request a liquid medication).
- The pharmacist will give you a print-out of side effects. Ask the doctor if there are any common or frequent side effects that you should keep an eye out for (i.e. some medications say to stay out of the sun or don't take with dairy products).
- Ask the pharmacist if there are special instructions for taking a prescription, e.g., avoid dairy for one hour, take at bedtime if a medication causes drowsiness, take before eating, etc.
- Ask if you should be taking something else with the medication (i.e. prednisone you should take calcium).
- Don't be afraid to ask the doctor for samples especially if it's a medication that you will be using for short-term use or if you are doing a trial.

- Do not change the form of any medication without speaking to your pharmacist (i.e. some medications can be crushed, chopped and mixed with juice). Always ask before altering a medication's form. Sustained release pills should not be crushed and some capsules should not be opened. Check with your pharmacist.
- If a medication tastes awful or if your child has many medications see about purchasing empty capsules and putting the medications into it so that your child won't have to taste them or swallow as many.
- Instead of leaving numerous prescription bottles on the counter of your kitchen designate a shelf in a cabinet. If there are a lot of prescription bottles, consider purchasing a three level spice rack.
- Color code bottles for each family member to make them easy to find.
- On your calendar write down the date to call a prescription and the prescription number so that you don't forget to renew it. This is critical with the 90 day mail away prescriptions since you have to wait to receive it. Some pharmacies have a monthly renewal reminder system. Inquire if your pharmacy can and will automatically renew prescriptions that are ongoing.
- If you are having difficulty with a pharmacy, request to have your insurance carrier intervene (if they are overseeing your prescription coverage).
- If your child is young and you are getting a medication in liquid form ask the doctor for extra to allow for spillage in case your child spits it out!
- Learn the brand and generic names and doses of medications your child is taking. This can help avoid prescription mistakes.
- If a refill prescription looks different than a previous supply, confirm with the pharmacist that the medication is indeed correct.