



MDwise

A McLaren Company

High Blood Pressure: Taking Medicines Properly

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Introduction

- Make your medicine schedule as simple as you can. Take your medicines when you are doing other things, like eating a meal or getting ready for bed. This will make it easier for you to remember to take them.
- Take a list of your medicines—or bring your medicines with you—when you visit your doctor. Include any medicines that were prescribed by other doctors and all your nonprescription medicines including vitamins and supplements. Review the list with your doctor, and discuss any side effects you are having or need to watch for.
- Talk with your doctor if you are having problems with your medicine schedule. Your doctor may be able to change your medicines or change the times you take them.
- Talk with your doctor if you have any changes in your health that might affect your blood pressure, such as weight gain, side effects of medicines, or another medical problem.
- Consider daily or weekly pill containers. These can help you remember which medicines to take and when to take them.
- Follow healthy lifestyle habits. These include staying at a healthy weight, exercising, not smoking, and following a healthy eating plan. If you do these things, your doctor may be able to reduce the amount of medicine you take. And the medicines may work better.

How can you take your blood pressure medicines properly?

Medicines work really well to control high blood pressure in most people. But they won't work if you don't take them as directed. Here's how you can get started on taking your medicines properly.

Get organized

It may not be too hard for most people to remember to take just one pill a day. But if you start adding more pills—pills that you need to take at different times and in different doses—it can get confusing.

A key to taking your medicines properly is to stay organized:

- **Make a list.** Make a written or typed list of every medicine you take, including things like aspirin and vitamins. Keep it up to date. Take a copy with you every time you go to the doctor. Use a form . Include space to write down any side effects you have.
- **Make a schedule.** Make a written or typed daily schedule of when you should take each of your medicines. Put it where you can easily see it every day—on the door of your medicine cabinet, for example. Use a daily planner . Take it along when you travel.
- **Use a pillbox.** Pillboxes can really help you keep track of your pills. Some hold a week's worth, with separate compartments for morning, noon, evening, and bedtime.
- **Use alarms.** Set your computer, wristwatch, or cell phone to beep when it's time to take your pills.
- **Simplify.** Ask your doctor if you can make your pill schedule simpler. For example, maybe you could take one longer-acting pill every day instead of several shorter-acting ones.
- **Control costs.** Compare prices between several drugstores, and consider mail-order drugstores. Ask your doctor if there is a generic brand you can take to save money.

Become an expert

The more you know about your medicines, the easier it will be to stay on your schedule and take your pills properly.

- **Know your medicines.** Have your doctor clearly explain what each medicine does. Write down both the brand and generic names. Have your doctor check the list. You can use this list to verify that the medicines you get from the pharmacy are correct.
- **Store medicines properly.** Your doctor or pharmacist can tell you how to store your medicines. Don't let your medicines get too hot or too cold. Always store them out of the reach of children.
- **Watch for side effects.** Ask your doctor or pharmacist about what side effects to expect. Write them down if you don't think you'll be able to remember them. Be sure to tell your doctor if you have side effects.
- **Have a plan for missed doses.** Talk with your doctor about what you should do if you accidentally miss a dose of a medicine. Discuss what to do for each medicine, because it may be different for each one. Write it down.
- **Talk to your doctor before you start taking other medicines.** This includes other prescription medicines, over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements. Some medicines can interact with each other and keep blood pressure medicines from working right. Or they can cause a bad reaction. Medicines that could cause a problem include:
 - Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), such as ibuprofen (for example, Advil or Motrin), indomethacin (Indocin), ketoprofen, naproxen (for example, Aleve or Naprosyn), and piroxicam (Feldene).
 - Decongestants, such as pseudoephedrine (for example, Sudafed).
 - Cold and flu medicines. These often contain decongestants and NSAIDs.
 - Antacids and other stomach medicines, which are often high in sodium.
 - Herbal or homeopathic remedies.

For more information, see:

- High Blood Pressure: Over-the-Counter Medicines to Avoid.
- Taking Medicines as Prescribed.
- Dealing With Medicine Side Effects and Interactions.

Related Information

- High Blood Pressure: Over-the-Counter Medicines to Avoid

Credits

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