



High Blood Pressure: Taking Medicines Properly

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Overview

It's important to take blood pressure medicine exactly as prescribed. Sometimes people find this hard to do. They may feel it's too much trouble—especially when they don't feel sick. Or they may worry about side effects. Some people find it hard to keep track of when and how to take their medicine.

There are steps you can take to help you take your medicine as prescribed.

- Work with your doctor to:
 - Find the right medicine or combination of medicines that have the fewest side effects and work well for you.
 - Solve any problems with your medicine schedule. Your doctor may be able to change your medicines or change when you take them.
- Explore ways to make taking your medicines easier. For example, you might use a pillbox and set a reminder on your phone.
- Learn more about your medicines, including side effects and what to do if you miss a dose.

How to take blood pressure medicines properly

Get organized

Most people can remember to take one pill a day. But if you have to take several medicines, it's easy to get confused. Getting organized can help.

- Make a list of every medicine you take.
Include things like aspirin and vitamins on your list. Keep it up to date. Take a copy of your list with you every time you go to the doctor. Note any side effects you have.
- Simplify your pill schedule.
Ask your doctor if, for example, you could take one longer-acting pill every day instead of several shorter-acting ones.
- Make a schedule of when you should take each of your medicines.
Put your schedule where you can easily see it every day—on the door of your medicine cabinet, for example. Take it along when you travel.
- Use a pillbox.

Some pillboxes hold a week's worth, with separate sections 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.
- 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.

Learn about your medicines

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. Ask your doctor to check the list. You can use the list to make sure that the medicines you get from the pharmacy are correct.
- Store your 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. 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 miss a dose of a medicine. Discuss what to do for each medicine. 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. It also includes over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and herbal pills. Some medicines can interact with each other and keep blood pressure medicines from working right. These include decongestants, antacids, and medicines such as ibuprofen (for example, Advil or Motrin).

Related Information

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

Credits

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