



MUST ASK QUESTIONS: What You Need to Know

Below are some questions you might want to ask your healthcare professional and pharmacist to help avoid problems when taking your medicines.

Questions for Your Healthcare Professional:

- What's the name of the medication and what is it supposed to do?
- Is this medication ok for someone my age? I've heard certain medications or doses are unsafe in older adults.
- Will this medicine work safely with other medications that I'm taking? (Tell your provider about *all* of the prescription and over-the-counter (OTC) medications, supplements and herbal remedies you take.) Can you review the medications I'm taking to see whether I still need all of them?
- I'm worried about costs. Is there a less expensive medication available?
- When can I expect the medication to start to work, and how will I know if it's working?
- For how long (how many days) will I need to take it?
- When and how should I take this medication? With or without food, at a certain time of day, not with dairy products, etc.?
- Is there a simpler dosing schedule to help me remember to take my medications? (This is especially important to ask if you are taking more than one medication.)
- Is there a maximum amount (dose) I need to be aware of so I don't take too much? (For example, the maximum daily limit (24 hours) for acetaminophen is 4,000 mg; acetaminophen can be found in both over-the-counter and prescription medications.) **Coming soon, expanded information about acetaminophen and older adults.**
- What side effects should I watch for? What should I do if I experience any of these side effects? I'm not sure I'd know whether to report it to you immediately, stop taking the medication or just wait and mention it at my next appointment.
- Should I avoid any activities, foods or alcohol when taking this medication?
- Do I need follow-up lab tests to tell how well the medicine is working or to see if I am having any problems?
- I am having trouble swallowing the pills/capsules. Are there other forms I can try?

Questions to Ask Your Pharmacist:

Your pharmacist is part of your health team, and can often answer questions you may have forgotten to ask your doctor.

- Does my insurance cover this medication? Is a generic or over-the-counter version available (if cost is an issue)?
- Do I need to be worried about this medication interacting with others I take/might take?
- What is the most important thing I should know about this medicine?
- Are safety instructions for this medication available in large print?
- Do you have pill bottles that are easier to open? I have trouble opening childproof medicine bottles. (If you do this, take extra care to keep them safe from grandchildren and pets).
- How should I store and dispose of this medication?
- Do you offer discount programs?

It's important for you to understand why you are taking each medication you are prescribed, as well as how to take them. If you are unsure of the name or purpose of any medication, ask your healthcare professional to spell it and write down what it's being used for on all prescriptions.

For more information about the safe and appropriate use of medications in older age, visit [Toolkits for older adults](#); [Medication management for older adults](#) and [Medication management for caregivers](#).