

Make your medicine work

Get better results by taking your pills the right way. Here's how.

YOUR DOCTOR recently prescribed you some new medication, but you haven't noticed any improvement in your condition. You might be tempted to blame the medication itself, but it could be that you didn't take it correctly (or perhaps you didn't take it at all). As many as 75% of the elderly have taken medication incorrectly from time to time, according to the National Council on Patient Information and Education (NCPPIE).




By **DR. TEDD MITCHELL**

This is problematic for Americans because as our aging population grows, so does the number of folks with chronic medical conditions requiring prescription drugs. Additionally, medical advances have made treatment possible for previously untreatable conditions, meaning that even more people are relying on medications.

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The key to successful treatment is twofold: active participation in your medication decision-making, and compliance. Become knowledgeable about the medications you take regularly and the conditions for which you take them. To help patients improve their "medicine smarts," the NCPPIE created a great resource (*see checklist sidebar at right*).

Start by taking a look at all of your medications. You should be able to answer each question on the NCPPIE's list for every medication you take. If you can, you are "medicine smart" and, therefore, more likely to be prescription compliant. If you can't answer all of the questions, then it's time to talk to your doctor to make sure you get informed.

To learn more about safe medicine use and the NCPPIE, go to talkaboutrx.org. 

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10 vital questions to ask about every prescription

1. What is the name of the medicine, and what is it for? (Also, is this the brand name or the generic name?)
2. Is a generic version available?
3. How, when and for how long do I take it?
4. What foods, drinks, other medicines, dietary supplements or activities should I avoid while taking this medicine?
5. When should this medicine start working? How will I know if it is? Are tests required while taking it (e.g., to check liver or kidney function)?
6. Are there any side effects? What are they, and what do I do if they occur?
7. Will this medicine work safely with other medicines (prescription and non-prescription)? Will it work safely with dietary/herbal supplements?
8. Will I need a refill? If so, when?
9. How should I store the medicine?
10. Is there written information about the medicine? Is it available in large print or other languages?

Source: National Council on Patient Information and Education