

# Drug Safety: Starting a New Drug

## Questions to Ask Your Doctor

Every time you get a new drug, make sure you understand why you are taking it and how to take it. Ask your doctor these 6 questions.

1. Why should I take this drug?
2. Is the drug safe for me?
3. How should I take it?
4. How long should I take it?
5. What are the side effects?
6. Is there a generic?

## Why should I take this drug?

Make sure you understand what the drug is for. If you are not sure you want to take it, tell the doctor your concerns. Ask if there are other ways to help your condition, such as diet and exercise.

## Is the drug safe for me?

Make sure your doctor knows:

- All the medicines you take. This includes over-the-counter drugs, vitamins, minerals, herbs, and dietary supplements.
- Any drug allergies or bad reactions that you have had to drugs.
- Any illnesses or conditions you have, such as diabetes or asthma.
- If you are nursing, pregnant, or planning to get pregnant.

## How should I take it?

- How often do I take the new drug?
- Do I take it before, after, or with a meal?
- How much do I take each time?
- Do I need to stop taking any other drugs while I am taking this one?
- Is there any food I should avoid? Can I drink alcohol? Is there anything I should not do, such as drive?

**Make sure you fully understand how to take your new drug before you leave the pharmacy. Don't hesitate to ask the pharmacist if you have questions.**



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## How long should I take the drug?

- How long do I need to take the drug? Do I need to finish the bottle? Can I stop when the symptoms are gone?
- How will I know if the drug is working?
- Will I need refills?

## What are the side effects?

- What side effects might I have?
- When should I call the doctor about a side effect?

## Is there a generic?

Tell your doctor if cost is a problem. Doctors often write prescriptions for brand-name drugs because the names are well known. But brand-name drugs cost more than generics. Ask if there is a generic that would work just as well.

### Our advice:

When you start a new prescription, follow these safety tips:

### Talk to your pharmacist.

When you pick up a new drug, make sure it is the drug your doctor prescribed. Review the directions and side effects. Ask if it is safe to take this drug with your other medicines.

## Read and save the printed information that comes with the new drug.

It tells you:

- What the drug is for, how to use it, and how to store it.
- What to do if you miss a dose or take too much.
- Common and serious side effects.
- How to avoid drug interactions.
- When to call your doctor.

## Start your new drug carefully.

- Pay attention to how you feel.
- Write down any side effects you have.
- Check back with your doctor if you are worried or you have any side effects.
- If your doctor wants you to have a lab test, make sure you get it. The lab test helps make sure that the drug is not causing a problem with your liver, kidneys, or anything else.
- Keep all your follow-up appointments with your doctor.
- Do not stop taking the drug before you are supposed to. If you think you want to stop it, talk to your doctor first.

## Learn more about your drugs.

To learn more, visit these websites:

- [www.ConsumerReportsHealth.org/BestBuyDrugs](http://www.ConsumerReportsHealth.org/BestBuyDrugs)
- [www.medlineplus.gov](http://www.medlineplus.gov)—click on Drugs & Supplements



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