

New Medicines: Questions to Ask the Doctor

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Ask the following questions if your doctor recommends a new medicine for your health condition.

General questions

What is the name of the medicine?

Brand name (trade name)

Generic name (chemical name)

What will the medicine do (for example, decrease blood pressure)?

Why do I need this medicine?

Are there any other medicine or treatment options?

How much does the medicine cost?

Is a generic form of the medicine available and appropriate for me?

Can I start with a prescription for a few days to make sure the medicine agrees with me?

Questions about taking the medicine

How is the medicine taken (for example, orally [by mouth] or through a skin patch)?

What amount do I take each time (dose)?

How often should it be taken (for example, 3 times a day)? When?

Should I take it with or without food?
What should I avoid while taking it (for example, certain foods, activities, other medicines, or alcohol)?
Will it interact with other medicines I am currently taking or other medical conditions? Yes No If yes, what might occur?
What are the common side effects (those that do not usually cause problems)?
What side effects should I report if I experience them?
What do I do if I miss a dose?
How long will I need to take this medicine (days, weeks, months)?
How will I know that the medicine is helping?
What is the next step if this medicine doesn't work?

Reminders

- Be sure you understand your doctor's instructions.
- State any concerns you have about taking the medicine. For example, ask if "4 doses daily" means taking a dose every 6 hours around the clock or just during regular waking hours.