

HOW TO TAKE MEDICATION

Medication route refers to the way that a drug is introduced into the body. This is based on the specific medication being used, the rate of absorption desired and the specific site of action (where the medication needs to have an effect). Most drugs are manufactured for a specific route of administration and must be used as directed for safety and efficiency.

Some examples of routes of administration include:

Oral: Medications are taken by mouth (in pill, capsule or liquid form) and absorbed into the system through the digestive system. Absorption is slow. Medications that use this option cannot be used if vomiting is occurring.

Enteral: Medications are administered into the rectum (via a suppository) and absorbed by the lower digestive tract.

Mucosal: Medications are delivered through the nose or inhaled and are absorbed through the nasal mucosa or bronchioles, respectively. Vaginal administration of a medication is also considered mucosal.

Parenteral: Any medication administration that involves injecting a drug directly into a vein (intravenous), muscle (intramuscular), artery (intra-arterial), abdominal cavity (intraperitoneal), heart (intracardiac) or into the fatty tissue beneath the skin (subcutaneous). The speed of absorption varies but is faster than oral administration. This is used when more complete and faster absorption of a drug is needed.

Percutaneous: Medications are absorbed directly through the skin into the blood stream. Some hormone replacements are administered by patches that are absorbed slowly and evenly, for example.

STANDARDIZED MEDICATION ADMINISTRATION SCHEDULE

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| <i>OD</i> | <i>Once a day</i> |
| <i>BID</i> | <i>Twice a day</i> |
| <i>TID</i> | <i>Three times a day</i> |
| <i>QID</i> | <i>Four times a day</i> |
| <i>Q4</i> | <i>Every four hours</i> |
| <i>Q6</i> | <i>Every six hours</i> |
| <i>Q8</i> | <i>Every eight hours</i> |
| <i>Q12</i> | <i>Every twelve hours</i> |
| <i>HS</i> | <i>Every hours of sleep or bedtime</i> |
| <i>AC</i> | <i>Before meals</i> |
| <i>PC</i> | <i>After meals</i> |

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Tell your doctor

- If you are allergic to any medications or have had an unusual reaction to any medication, food, or other substance
- If you are currently taking any other medications (including over-the-counter medications) or dietary supplements such as herbal preparations, vitamins, and minerals
- If you are pregnant, think you might be pregnant, or plan to become pregnant
- If you are breastfeeding
- If you are following a special diet, such as a low-sodium or low-sugar diet
- If you have any other medical problems other than the one(s) for which your medication is being prescribed
- If you have problems taking medication

Note: These are general guidelines. Be sure to ask your doctor or pharmacist for guidelines specific to your medication.

How to take your medications

- Keep with you a list of all your medications and their dosages. Keep with you a list of all your medications (generic and brand names) and their dosages. Know why these medications are being prescribed.
- When taking some medications, such as warfarin (Coumadin®) and insulin, you must wear medical identification in case you need emergency medical treatment. Ask your doctor if you need to wear medical identification for your type of medication.
- Take your medications exactly as prescribed by your doctor, including at the right times and for the full length of your prescribed treatment. Consider getting a pill box that is marked with the days of the week. Fill the pill box at the beginning of each week to make it easier for you to remember. However, please keep any remaining medications in their original containers.
- Do not stop taking your medication unless you first talk to your doctor. Stopping your medication too early can cause the illness to return or make it more difficult to treat.
- Contact your doctor immediately if you experience any unusual side effects after taking your medication.
- Follow the label instructions carefully. Some medications need to be taken with food, while others should be taken on an empty stomach.
- Ask your doctor or pharmacist if there are any foods that should be avoided while taking your medication.
- If you are taking medications with water, use a full 8-ounce glass of water. Do not just sip enough water to swallow the pills. Not drinking enough water with some medications can prevent them from working properly and can cause throat irritation.
- Do not break, crush, or chew medications before swallowing them unless you have been instructed to do so.
- In most cases, you should not take any medications with alcoholic beverages. Check with your doctor for specific medication interactions or ask your pharmacist for more information.
- Do not take a double dose of medicine.
- Do not share your medication with others.

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- Do not decrease your medication dosage to save money. You must take the prescribed amount to get the full benefits. Talk with your doctor about ways you can reduce the costs of your medications.

When to take your medication

- Try to take your medications at the same time every day. Follow your doctor's orders to achieve the full benefit and lessen the possible side effects of your medications.
- Don't panic if you miss a dose of your medication. Take it as soon as you remember. If it is almost time for your next dose, skip the missed dose and return to your regular medication schedule. Do not take two doses to make up for the dose you missed.

Refill guidelines

- Refill your prescription while you still have a 5- to 7-day supply left. Some sources, such as mail order pharmacies, have a longer lead-time for refills.

Storage guidelines

- Unless given other storage instructions, store medications in a dry area away from heat and direct light. Do not store tablets and capsules in the bathroom, near the kitchen sink, or in other damp places. Do not leave your medication in your car for a long period of time.
- Do not store medications in the refrigerator unless directed to do so.
- Always keep medications out of the reach of children.
- If you store your medications in a pill organizer, label it with the medication name, dose, frequency, and expiration date.
- It is best to keep your medication tightly capped in its original container when not in use.
- Do not keep medications that are outdated or no longer needed. Throw away old medications.

Travel guidelines

Keep your medications in their original containers in your carry-on luggage when you travel. Do not pack your medications in checked luggage in case your suitcase is lost. Take extra medication with you when you travel in case your flight is delayed and you need to stay away longer than planned.

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Questions to ask about your medications

Be sure you know the answers to the following questions before you start taking any new medication:

- What are the generic and brand names of the medication?
- Why do I need to take it?
- How often should I take it?
- What time of day should I take it?
- Should I take it on an empty stomach or with meals?
- Where should I store the medication?
- What should I do if I miss a dose?
- How long should I expect to take the medication?
- How will I know it is working?
- What side effects should I expect?
- Will the medication interfere with driving, working, or other activities?
- Does the medication interact with any foods, alcohol, other medications (including over-the-counter medications), or activities?