

Talk with your
health care
provider or
pharmacist if you
have questions
about your
medications.



The importance of understanding your medications

Medications play an important role in managing illnesses, but they can also be harmful if taken improperly. This brochure has tips and information to help you understand your medications and how to take them correctly and safely.

Types of medications

Prescription medications: Medications that require a prescription from your health care provider and are dispensed at a pharmacy.

Over-the-counter or OTC medications:

Medications you can buy without a prescription, such as cold and cough medications, ibuprofen or laxatives.

Dietary supplements: Vitamins, minerals or herbals intended to be added to one's diet for health benefits. They come in different forms including teas, capsules, extracts and powders.

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Samaritan
Health Plans

2300 NW Walnut Blvd., Corvallis
800-832-4580 (TTY 800-735-2900)

samhealthplans.org

Medications matter



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Healthier Together

A wellness brochure made for members
of Samaritan Health Plans.



Medication side effects

What are they and when can they happen?

A side effect is an unwanted or unexpected effect on the body and may range from mild to severe. Common side effects include upset stomach, headache, dry mouth and drowsiness. Side effects can happen at any time but are most common when you start, stop or change the amount of medication you take. Some side effects will go away with time. Others will continue as long as you take the medication. Talk with your provider or pharmacist about any new symptoms you have after starting a medicine, even if you are not sure if it is from the medicine you are taking.

Medication safety

To stay safe and get the most benefit from your medications:

Do the following:

- ✓ Take medications exactly as prescribed by your health care provider.
- ✓ Take your medications at the right time every day. They work better when taken on a regular schedule.
- ✓ Finish your prescription even if you start to feel better. Talk with your health care provider before you stop taking a medication.
- ✓ Use the same pharmacy to fill all your prescriptions. They can help you keep track of the medications you are taking and tell you about possible interactions.
- ✓ Keep your medications out of the reach of children and pets.
- ✓ Ask your health care provider or pharmacist about how to safely dispose of medications.

Do not do the following:

- ✗ Use medications from a previous illness, unless instructed to do so by your health care provider.
- ✗ Stop taking medications without first talking to your health care provider.
- ✗ Use medications that were prescribed for someone else.
- ✗ Use medications past their expiration date.

Important tips

Know your medications

Know the name of each medication you take and understand why you take it. Keep a list with you in case of an emergency.

Talk with your provider or pharmacist

Review your medication list with your health care provider at each appointment. Discuss all prescriptions, OTC medications, dietary supplements or creams you are using.

Ask questions

If you are unsure about a medication you are taking or the way it makes you feel, talk to your health care provider. If you have difficulty taking or remembering to take a medication, be sure to discuss this with your health care provider as well.

Ask about interactions

Sometimes when two or more medications are taken together it can cause a side effect. This is called an interaction. Interactions can happen when taking prescription medications, OTC medications, herbal supplements and vitamins. It can also happen with certain foods and alcohol. Side effects can range from mild to severe. It is important to make sure your provider or pharmacist is aware of everything you are taking so they can advise you on possible interactions.