

When Getting A Prescription

The single most important way you can stay healthy is to be an active member of your own health care team. One way to get high-quality health care is to find and use information and take an active role in all of the decisions made about your care. This card will help you when getting a prescription filled.

Understanding the importance your medication plays in your treatment will help you get the most benefit from your prescription. It is important to take an active role in your health care by working with your doctor, nurse, and pharmacist to learn as much as possible about your prescription.

When you are prescribed a new medication, ask your doctor or pharmacist the following questions:

- What is the name of the medicine? What is it supposed to do?
- Is it okay to substitute a less-expensive generic medicine for the name brand? Will it achieve the same effect?
- What is the dose of the medicine? Are there food, drinks, other medicines, or activities I should avoid while taking this medicine?
- What are the possible side effects of the medicine? What should I do if they occur?
- How many refills of this prescription can I get?
- What should I do if I miss a dose?
- What should I do if I accidentally take more than the recommended dose?
- Is there any written information I can take home with me? (Most pharmacies have information sheets that you can use as an at-home reference.)

When you pick up your medicine at the pharmacy, check to be sure it is the medicine you were prescribed by your doctor.

When your doctor prescribes a medication for you for the first time, make sure to tell him/her the following:

- The names of all medicines you are currently taking, including both over-the-counter and prescription medication. It is important for your doctor to know this information in order to prescribe the medicine that will be the most helpful.
- Any concerns you have about using your medication.
- If you are allergic to any medication or have had troubling side effects from a medication that has been prescribed to you.

During your treatment, you should schedule a follow-up visit to your physician in order to monitor your progress. Make sure to tell him/her:

- About any problems you are having with your prescription.
- About any side effects or problems you have had since starting to take the prescription.
- About any new prescriptions that another doctor may have given you and any over-the-counter medicines that you started taking since your last doctor's visit.
- How you are feeling since starting the medication.

Remember, quality matters, especially when it comes to your health. For more information on health care quality and materials to help you make health care decisions, visit <http://www.ahrq.gov/consumer/pathqpack.htm>

