

“Think It Through”

To Manage The Benefits And Risks Of All Medicines

(NAPS)—Although medicines can make you feel better and help you get well, it’s important to know that all medicines, both prescription and over-the-counter, have risks as well as benefits.

The *benefits* of medicines are the helpful effects you get when you use them, such as lowering blood pressure, curing infection or relieving pain. The *risks* of medicines are the chances that something unwanted or unexpected could happen to you when you use them. Risks could be less serious things, such as an upset stomach, or more serious things, such as liver damage.

When a medicine’s benefits outweigh its known risks, The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) considers it safe enough to approve. But before using any medicine—as with many things that you do every day—you should *think through* the benefits and the risks in order to make the best choice for you.

Types of risks from medicine use:

- The possibility of a harmful interaction between the medicine and a food, beverage, dietary supplement (including vitamins and herbals), or another medicine. Combinations of these products can increase the chance of interactions.

- The chance that the medicine may not work as expected.

- The possibility that the medicine may cause additional problems.

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The best choice depends on your particular situation. You must decide what risks you can and will accept in order to get the benefits you want. For example, if facing a life-threatening illness, you might choose to accept more risk in the hope of getting the benefits of a cure or living a longer life. On the other hand, if you are facing a minor illness, you might decide that you want to take very little risk.

Think it through and work together with your health care team to better manage the benefits and risks of your medicines.

Specific ways to manage the benefits and risks of medicines can be found in the “Think it Through” pamphlet. It can be viewed at www.fda.gov/cder/consumerinfo/DPAdefault.htm, or ordered via e-mail at dpapubs@cderr.fda.gov.