

Tips for Choosing Over-The-Counter Medications



Read labels to avoid ingredients in over-the-counter medications —OTCs (medications that do not require a prescription) that can harm the kidneys:



Decongestants to avoid:

- Pseudoephedrine



Pain medications to avoid:

- NSAIDS (Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs) such as Ibuprofen and Naproxen
- Aspirin products, unless prescribed by a doctor

Always check OTC cold/cough medications for the above ingredients.



Antacids and laxatives to avoid:

- Any medication with either magnesium, phosphorus or aluminum

Questions for the Pharmacist

A pharmacist can clarify the doctor's instructions. Always ask:

- What is this medication supposed to do?
- When and how is the medication to be taken?
- Does this medication interact with any other medication(s)?
- Is there anything to avoid eating or drinking while on this medication?
- What should be done when a dose of medication is missed?
- What is the best way to tell if a medication is working?
- What is the best way to store the medication?



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What is Medication Adherence?

Taking medications exactly the way the doctor has described and as listed on the bottle's label or box is medication adherence.

This means:

- Taking the right number of pills,
- Taking the medication at the right time,
- Avoiding missed doses,
- Avoiding foods, drugs and activities that might stop the medicine from working correctly, and
- Working with a pharmacist to understand how the medication works.

A patient should tell the doctor about any over-the-counter medications, supplements or herbs taken regularly.



Why Is Medication Adherence Important?

Taking medication using the information on the label, can help avoid long-term problems like kidney disease, stroke, heart attack and death.

Sometimes, a medication does not change the way a patient feels. This does not mean that the medication is not working; medications can help a patient avoid future problems.

Try these tips to make medication adherence easier:



Use a pillbox Pick one up that stores medications by time of day and/or by day.



Be organized Make a calendar that shows the times when medications are to be taken.



Develop a habit Connect taking medication to another activity that happens daily at the same time, like walking the dog, getting mail or eating dinner.



Be informed Ask a pharmacist questions to better understand the doctor's instructions.

Helpful Hints for Storing Medication

Proper storage helps medicine provide full benefit. Be sure to check



Most medications should be kept in room temperature, away from light and moisture.



Some medications (like insulin) need to be kept in the refrigerator.



Never leave your medications within the reach of children.



Avoid storing medications in bathroom cabinets because moisture can be a problem.