



Mastering Your Medications

Medicines and Pharmacy

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Date: November 8, 2025

Agenda for Today

What We Will Cover...

- **The Foundation:** Your Personal Medication List & the Pharmacist Relationship
- **Understanding What You Take:** Labels, Generics, and Brands
- **Staying Safe:** Interactions, Side Effects, and OTCs
- **Staying Organized:** Managing Multiple Medications
- **Smart Choices:** Tools, Tips, and Cost-Saving Insights
- **Your Questions Answered**

SECTION 1: The Foundation

Your Most Important Health Document

Your Personal Medication List

Why you need it:

- Prevents dangerous errors.
- Essential for doctors, ER visits, and new pharmacists.
- Helps you and your family stay informed.

What to include:

- **All Prescriptions** (Name, Strength, Instructions)
- **Over-the-Counter (OTC) Drugs & Herbals**
- **Vitamins & Supplements**
- **Any Known Drug Allergies**



Your Pharmacist: Your Medication Expert

They are your most accessible healthcare professional!



You Can Ask Your Pharmacist About:	They Can Help You With:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How and when to take your medicine	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Filling your pill organizer
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Possible side effects	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Finding lower-cost options
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Drug interactions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understanding insurance paperwork
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Choosing an OTC product	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Coordinating with your doctor

Action Tip: Try to use one pharmacy for all your needs. This helps them keep a complete record and better protect you.

SECTION 2:

Understanding What You Take

Decoding the Prescription Label

Key Parts to Always Check:

- **Patient Name:** Is it yours?
- **Drug Name & Strength:** Brand and Generic.
- **Instructions:** The "Sig" (e.g., "Take 1 tablet by mouth twice daily").
- **Purpose:** Why you are taking it (if listed).
- **Expiration Date:** Do not use after this date.
- **Refills:** How many are left? Plan ahead.

The image shows a sample prescription label with the following fields and labels:

- Patient name:** MILLER, JANE
- Medication name:** ACYCLOVIR
- Medication strength:** 400 MG TABLETS
- Instructions for use:** take one tablet by mouth every 12 hours
- Prescription number:** Rx# 8188542
- Refills remaining:** NO REFILLS
- Prescriber name:** Pres by: SMITH, H
- Medication quantity:** QTY: 60
- Pharmacy information:** 2 MAIN STREET, NEW YORK, NY 10002; RPh: VL; MRN: 22222222; Phone: (646) 888-0730; Memorial Hospital for Cancer & Allied Diseases; 444 East 68th ST, NEW YORK, NY 10065; DEA # FM7306726 Store # 00

Common Instruction Terms

Abbreviation	What It Means
QD	Once a Day
BID	Twice a Day
TID	Three Times a Day
PRN	As Needed
With Food	Take with a Meal
Empty Stomach	Take 1 hr before or 2 hrs after food

Always ask your pharmacist to explain in plain language if you are unsure.

Generic vs. Brand Name: What's the Difference?

Brand Name (e.g., Lipitor®)	Generic Name (e.g., Atorvastatin)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Developed by a company.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Approved by the FDA after the brand patent expires.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Often more expensive.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Same active ingredient, strength, and safety.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• First name given to the drug.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Costs 80-85% less on average.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Example: Advil® is the brand for Ibuprofen.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The "chemical" name of the drug.



Myth Buster: Generics are required by the FDA to work the same way in the body as the brand-name drug.

Store Brand vs. Name Brand: OTC Edition

Name Brand (e.g., Tylenol®)	Store Brand (e.g., CVS Health Acetaminophen)
• Heavily advertised.	• Not advertised; costs less.
• You pay for the marketing.	• Same active ingredient and strength.
• Example: Benadryl®	• Must meet the same FDA quality standards.
	• Example: Equate® Diphenhydramine (at Walmart)



Smart Shopper Tips:

1. Compare the "**Active Ingredients**" panel on the back. If they match, the medicine works the same.
2. Most Store Brand medicines list the Name Brand as "Compare to".

SECTION 3: Staying Safe

Drug Interactions: A Practical Guide



An interaction is when one drug affects another.

Interaction Type	Example	Result
Drug-Drug	Blood Thinner (Warfarin) + Aspirin	Risk of serious bleeding
Drug-Food	Statin (Cholesterol) + Grapefruit Juice	Increased side effects
Drug-Herb	Blood Thinner + Ginkgo Biloba	Increased bleeding risk
Drug-Alcohol	Pain Meds + Alcohol	Dangerous drowsiness, risk of overdose

Your Best Defense: Use one pharmacy and tell your pharmacist about **everything** you take.

Understanding Side Effects

Common (Often Temporary)	Serious (Call Doctor Immediately)
Mild nausea	Trouble breathing, swelling of face/lips
Dizziness	Unusual bleeding/bruising
Dry mouth	Severe skin rash or blisters
Constipation	Fainting or severe dizziness
Headache	Thoughts of harming yourself

Rule of Thumb: Never stop taking a prescription medication because of a side effect without talking to your doctor first.

The OTC Aisle: Navigate Safely

The #1 Rule: Always Check the Active Ingredients!



Example: The Tylenol Overlap Problem

- **Prescription:** Percocet (contains acetaminophen)
- **OTC Purchase:** "Extra Strength Tylenol" (acetaminophen) for a headache.
- **The Risk:** You could accidentally take a toxic dose of acetaminophen, harming your liver.

Always ask: "Is this new OTC product safe with my current prescriptions?"

SECTION 4:

Staying Organized

Managing Multiple Medications

Polypharmacy doesn't have to be overwhelming.

Top Strategies:

- 1. Pill Organizer:** A weekly box with AM/PM slots prevents double-dosing or missed doses.
- 2. Medication List:** Keep it updated and in your wallet.
- 3. Routine:** Take medicines at the same time every day, linked to a daily habit (e.g., after brushing teeth).
- 4. Annual "Brown Bag" Review:** Put all your medicines in a bag and bring them to your doctor or pharmacist for a review. **This is a free and vital safety check!**



Safe Storage and Disposal



Do's	Don'ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Store in a cool, dry place (not the bathroom!).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Don't leave them on the kitchen counter.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Keep in original containers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Don't share your prescription medicines.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Secure them away from children & pets.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Don't flush them down the toilet.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dispose of old meds at a pharmacy or police take-back program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Don't use them after the expiration date.

High-Level Cost-Saving Tips

Discussing options with your doctor and pharmacist can save money.



Strategy	How It Works	Ask Your Doctor/Pharmacist:
Generic Preference	Using a generic instead of a brand-name drug.	"Is a generic available for this prescription?"
Therapeutic Alternatives	A different, equally effective drug that may cost less.	"Is there a similar medicine that might be less expensive?"
90-Day Supplies	Getting a 3-month supply for a lower co-pay.	"Am I able to get a 90-day supply for maintenance medication?"
Pill Splitting	Sometimes, a higher-strength pill can be split for a lower cost.	"Is this tablet safe to split?" (Not all are!)

Simple Tools for Reminders

You don't need to be tech-savvy to get organized.



Low-Tech	High-Tech (Simple)
• Weekly Pill Organizer	• Simple Alarm Clock/Timer
• Printed Calendar (check off doses)	• Basic Phone Reminder (alarm feature)
• Notepad by your medicines	• Automatic Pill Dispenser (locks and beeps)
	• Apps: Medisafe or MyTherapy (family can help set up)

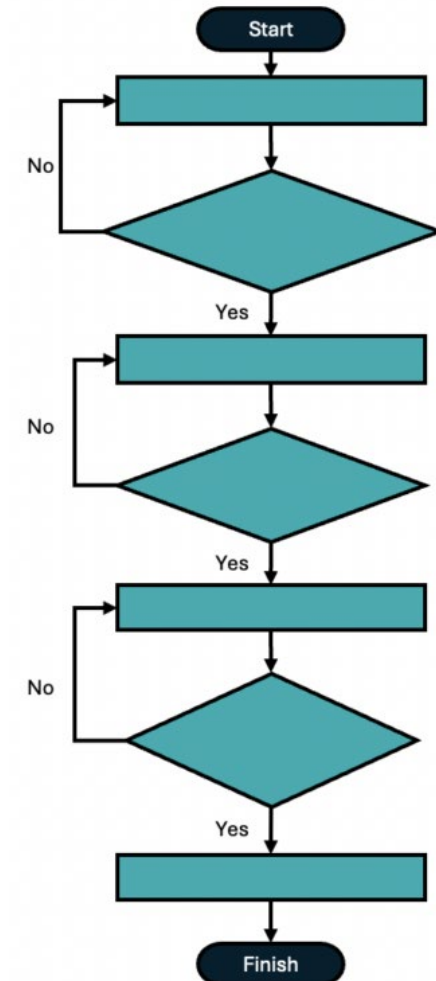
When to Call: Pharmacist vs. Doctor

Your Pharmacist is your first call for:

- **How-to** questions (e.g., "Can I take this with food?")
- **Side Effect** concerns
- **Drug Interaction** questions
- **OTC product** recommendations

Your Doctor is your first call for:

- **New or worsening** symptoms
- **Adjusting** doses or changing medications
- **Questions about your diagnosis**
- **Medical Emergencies (Call 911)**



Recap: Your Medication Safety Checklist

- ☒ I have a **current medication list** in my wallet.
- ☒ I **understand the purpose** of each of my medicines.
- ☒ I **ask about generics and cost-saving options**.
- ☒ I **use one pharmacy** for all my prescriptions.
- ☒ I **review all OTC products** with my pharmacist.
- ☒ I **know the serious side effects** to watch for.
- ☒ I **will schedule a "Brown Bag" review** this year.

You are the CEO of your health!

Thank You & Questions?

Thank You For Your Time!

Your health and safety are
our priority.

Please feel free to come up
with general questions.

