

# Mastering Your Medications

Medicines and Pharmacy

**Presenter: Jagruti Modi, R.Ph.**



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# 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

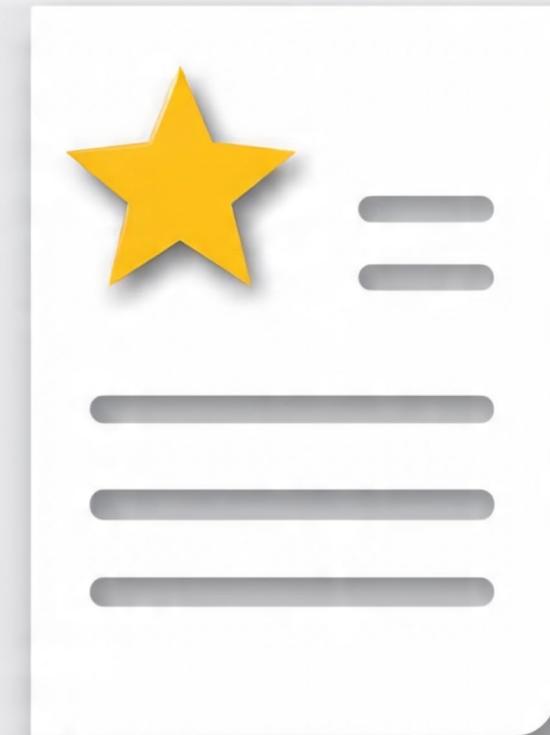
## Your Personal Medication List

### 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:
• How and when to take your medicine	• Filling your pill organizer
• Possible side effects	• Finding lower-cost options
• Drug interactions	• Understanding insurance paperwork
• Choosing an OTC product	• 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.



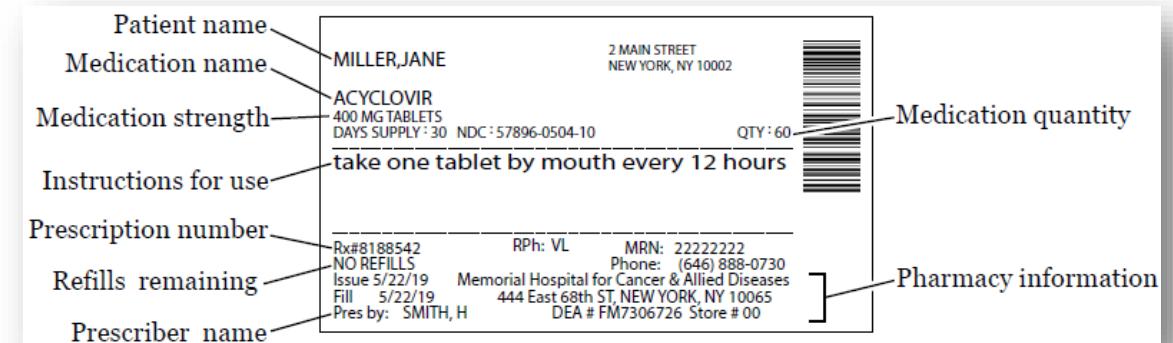
# **SECTION 2:**

# **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.



# 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)
• Developed by a company.	• Approved by the FDA after the brand patent expires.
• Often more expensive.	• <b>Same active ingredient, strength, and safety.</b>
• First name given to the drug.	• <b>Costs 80-85% less on average.</b>
• Example: Advil® is the brand for Ibuprofen.	• 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)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Heavily advertised.</li><li>• You pay for the marketing.</li><li>• Example: Benadryl®</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Not advertised; costs less.</li><li>• <b>Same active ingredient and strength.</b></li><li>• Must meet the same FDA quality standards.</li><li>• Example: Equate® Diphenhydramine (at Walmart)</li></ul>



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

# High-Level Cost-Saving Tips

Discussing options with your doctor and pharmacist can save money.



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

# Simple Tools for Reminders

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



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

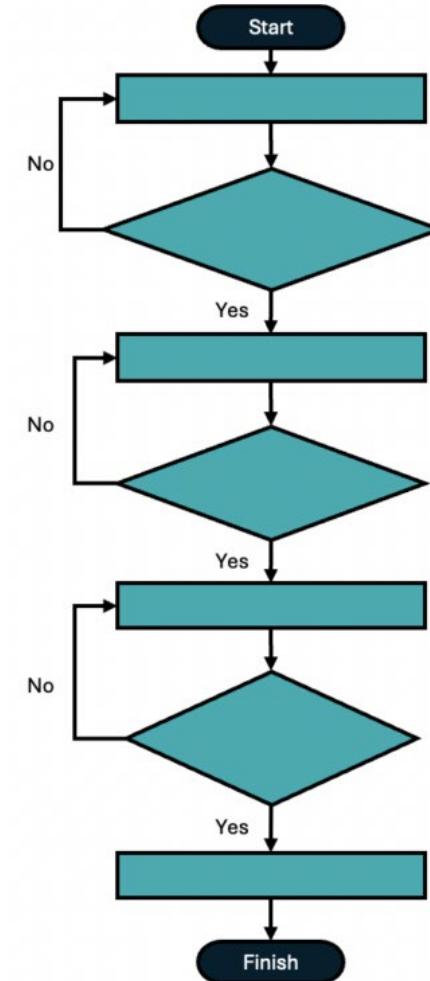
# When to Call: Pharmacist vs. Doctor

## 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.**

