

# **Your Care at Home: Managing Your Medicine**

## **Narrator**

It's very important to take all your medicines as your health care team ordered. Sometimes, though, life gets in the way. Problems can crop up and make it hard to stick to your meds.

My friend and I have some tips for you. In the next few minutes, we'll talk about some common problems that you may have with your medicines and then give you some solutions for staying on track with them. Sound good?

One common problem: meds can be expensive, especially if you're on a limited budget. Some solutions?

- Some organizations can help you get prescriptions at little or no cost, [pparx.org](http://pparx.org) is one of them. Go online to learn more.
- Generics may be a less costly choice. Ask your doctor or pharmacist, and
- Talk to your doctor or nurse about other options.

Another problem might be that you have no way to get to the pharmacy.

- Try contacting your local office on aging. Many communities have resources to help.
- Ask your doctor or nurse if mail order is an option for you.
- Find a pharmacy that delivers, or
- Ask a friend or family member for a ride.

Perhaps you've got several meds. It can get confusing knowing when and why to take all of them. Solution: keep an up-to-date list of every medicine you take, prescription AND over-the-counter. Include how to take each one, when to take them and how much to take. Take this list and all your meds in their original packaging with you when you have a doctor appointment to make sure you have all this information right.

Still confused? Try this. Use the same pharmacy or pharmacy chain for all your prescriptions. If you're taking a lot of medicines, ask your doctor if they're all necessary or if any of them can be combined so you have fewer pills to deal with.

Some people stop taking their medicines when it causes unpleasant side effects. If your meds give you a stomachache, make you dizzy, or cause other problems, there are several things you can do. First, make sure you're taking all your meds correctly. That means the right amount, at the right time and in the right way, for example, taking it with food. If you're starting a new drug with known side effects, ask if you can begin with a smaller dose to give your body time to adjust. And know the warning signs, such as swelling or dizziness that could signal an emergency.

Other medicine side effects may be a pain for your lifestyle. Maybe they make you go to the bathroom more frequently or they wake you up at night. The answer? Don't stop taking it! Talk to your doctor or nurse to see if there's a way to adjust when or how to take it so it's not such a hassle.

Problem: you just forget to take your meds. It happens. There are loads of ways to remind you to take your pills: alarms can be set, regular or electronic pill boxes give you a visual reminder, your caregiver can keep you on track, or a home health aide could teach you some memory aids. Many prescriptions can automatically be refilled, one less thing to remember.

Maybe the problem is you're feeling fine. You don't think you need a drug anymore. First and foremost, NEVER stop taking a drug without talking to your doctor first. The reason you're feeling fine is usually because the medicine is doing its job!

A few final tips to make sure your medicine works for you:

- Don't use expired meds
- If your medicine looks or smells funny, call your pharmacist before you take it
- Know where and how to store each medicine

- Never cut, chop, or crush medicine without checking with your pharmacist, this could change how the drug works, and
- If you can't swallow pills, ask about alternatives, maybe there's a liquid form, for example.

Finally, if you notice a pill in your stool, that doesn't necessarily mean you didn't get the benefit of it. Some pills pass through your system that way. Remember, if you're unsure about this or any other information about your medicine, give your pharmacist a call.