

Medication Management

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It's vital to your recovery that you understand the power of your medications. For patients with heart disease, the combination of four medications: the statin, the beta-blocker, an ACE inhibitor, and anticoagulants such as warfarin or anti-platelet drugs such as aspirin, can lower your risk of another cardiac event. Patients often tell me they've stopped taking a medication because of its side effects, its cost, or problems getting refills, or they say they're feeling better and don't think they need it any more, or it just doesn't fit into their daily schedule. Please talk with your doctor before you stop taking any of your medications. Your doctor can work with you to solve any of these problems.

One of the difficulties I have as a doctor is keeping track of all the medications my patients are taking. My patients may see several different doctors, and each one may prescribe something different. I also don't know when my patients had an over-the-counter medication or changed the dose of something I've prescribed.

No one should ever change the dose without talking to a doctor first. The best way to keep all your doctors informed is to keep a current list of all your medications, including the over-the-counter meds, herbs and vitamins, and bring it to every visit. Your notebook has a form you can use to list your medications; take advantage of that. If you can't bring a list, just put all your medications, including the over-the-counter ones, in a bag and bring them with you.

Remember: medication is the most effective treatment available, but all a doctor can do is to write the prescription, the rest is up to you.