

# Medication Safety: Recognizing Side Effects

With any medication comes the possibility of side effects. Before beginning a new medication, discuss all possible side effects with your healthcare provider so you know what to be aware of.

You should notice most side effects when you first start taking the new medication or through the first couple of weeks. If you do experience any side effects let your healthcare provider know right away.

Your side effects may go away with time. If not, your healthcare provider may need to adjust the dosage or change your medication to help reduce your side effects.

If you are experiencing side effects, do not stop taking your medication unless your healthcare provider tells you to.

When taking a medication, on occasion, your body may experience an allergic reaction.

This is an uncommon side effect but it can be serious. You will not experience an allergic reaction the first time you take a medication. But if you have taken the medication before, your body may have an allergic reaction.

Common symptoms of allergic reaction include a skin rash, hives and itchy, irritated skin.

Some symptoms can be more serious.

If you think you may be having an allergic reaction to a medication you are taking, contact your healthcare provider immediately.

Sometimes the side effects you are experiencing are not from the medication alone, but from a reaction between 2 medications you are taking. Before taking a new medication make sure your healthcare provider is aware of all of the medications you take, including vitamins, herbal supplements and over-the-counter pills.

Some medications, even over-the-counter medications you take for a cold or upset stomach -- can have a bad reaction with your prescription medications.

Depending on the medication you are prescribed, drinking alcohol may interact with its effectiveness and increase your risk of illness or injury. Before you mix alcohol with any medication, talk to your healthcare provider or pharmacist.

And finally, many medications come with directions on how and when to take them. For example, "on an empty stomach", "with meals", or "with plenty of water". Following these instructions will help prevent or reduce any side effects you may have.