

What's the Difference?

BRAND NAME — GENERIC

A generic drug is called by its chemical name; a manufacturer assigns a brand name. **Examples:** Ibuprofen is Advil, loratadine is Claritin; and acetaminophen is Tylenol. They have the same ingredients but the generic form usually costs less. The FDA requires that the generic form be equivalent to the brand-name drug in dosage, strength, safety and medical effect within a specified scope. **The takeaway:** Ask your provider to prescribe the most effective drug at the best price.

PREFERRED — NONPREFERRED

You may encounter these terms with your health insurance prescription coverage. They usually refer to two name-brand drugs that treat the same problem. The difference is that your insurer can usually provide one (the preferred version) at a lower cost than the nonpreferred. You generally pay more for the nonpreferred drug.

OTIC — OPHTHALMIC

Getting these two terms confused can be serious. Otic is for the ears. Ophthalmic is for the eyes. Ear drops should never go in the eye, and if used in the eye by mistake can have serious consequences. This is another reason to confirm what you're using every time you use it.

ALLERGY — SIDE EFFECT

You may think you are having an allergic reaction to a drug when what you are really experiencing is a side effect. Side effects include symptoms such as drowsiness, nausea, diarrhea or impaired sexual function; these may subside over time or if you take a lower dose. While most side effects do not present a health risk, report those that persist or become severe to your health care provider. Allergies may cause skin rashes or breathing problems. They can be serious and, on occasion, even fatal. **Tip:** Keep a record of side effects, and report allergic reactions to your provider.



MORE TIPS: Getting the Most From Your Medicine

Make a list. Keeping a list of all the medications you take regularly, including nonprescription drugs, herbal medicines and dietary supplements, can be helpful during emergencies, checkups and while talking to your health care providers. Include the frequency of use, the dose, the imprint on the tablet or capsule and the name of the pharmacy that filled each prescription.

Tip: Keep an information card in your wallet or purse if possible. Update it as changes occur.

Know what to avoid while taking a medicine. You'll find precautionary instructions in the patient information that accompanies your prescription. Some examples include using tobacco and/or alcohol, avoiding certain foods, minimizing sun exposure, driving a vehicle or operating dangerous machinery.

Get to know your pharmacist. Most are happy to answer questions and monitor all medications you are using. It's a good way to help prevent errors and interactions.



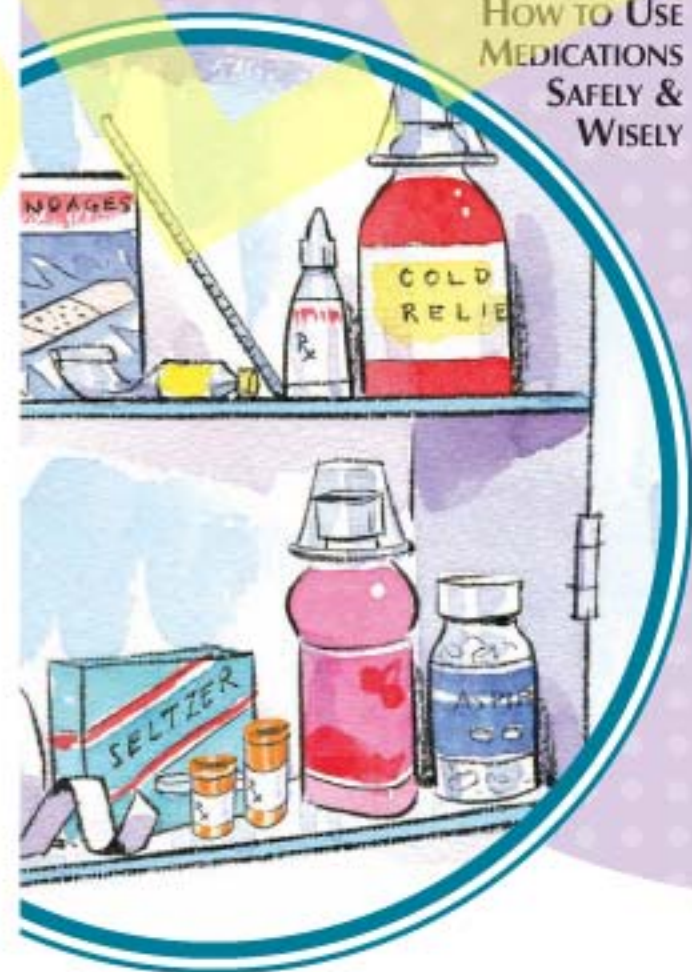
Keep learning. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration's MedWatch program offers an Internet resource for information about drugs and other medical products regulated by the FDA. The site is www.fda.gov/medwatch.

Final thought: Medication, whether over-the-counter or prescription, comes with some degree of risk. Partner with your health care providers and pharmacy by sharing in the responsibility — and success — of using your medicines safely and wisely.

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GETTING THE MOST FROM YOUR MEDICINE

HOW TO USE
MEDICATIONS
SAFELY &
WISELY



DO YOU TAKE YOUR MEDICINE SERIOUSLY?

Your medicine is important to your health. But using medications, both prescription and over-the-counter, can be complicated, especially given that many people take multiple prescriptions, which can have potential side effects and adverse interactions.

The tips in this brochure can help you become more informed about your medications and help you work with your doctors, nurses, physician assistants and pharmacist to make sure medications work for your health, not against it.



So You Need a Prescription

Questions to ask your health care provider:

1. What is the **name** of the medication?
2. Is this the **brand or generic** name? (Find out if a generic version is available and if your provider advises taking it.)
3. How will it help my **health condition**?
4. **How and when** do I take the medication and for how long?
5. What foods, drinks, herbals, vitamins or other drugs do I need to **avoid** while taking this medication?
6. Do I need to avoid any **activities** while taking this medication?
7. Are there any potential **side effects**, and what should I do if they occur?
8. What is the **risk of interactions** with other prescription and over-the-counter drugs I'm taking?
9. How will I know if the medication is **working**?
10. Does this drug contain anything I'm **allergic** to?
11. **How long** has the drug been on the market? Does it have a **safety record**?
12. **How much** does this drug cost? Are there equally **effective** but less costly drug options available to me?

The bottom line: Working with your health care providers and pharmacist is the best way to make sure your medicine does what it's supposed to do.



Taking Your Medication — It's Up to You

Make sure it's for you.

Confirm that your filled prescription contains your name and personal information and not someone else's.

Read all materials.

Printed details, known

as patient information, should accompany your prescription. Read it thoroughly for information and to get the best results. If you don't understand something, talk to your pharmacist before using the medicine.

Take as directed. Taking medication as prescribed is essential to the medication's success. **Tip:** If you take multiple prescriptions, read each label with every dose you take to be sure you're not taking a medicine twice or missing a dose of another.

What to keep in mind:

1. If **side effects** become a concern, let your health care provider know right away.
2. You may or may not feel the medication **working**. But if a problem persists once you've completed the treatment, call your provider.
3. **Finish** the prescription even if you are feeling better. Your health care provider sets the number of days for a reason.

Did You Know?

Some medications should not be chewed, cut, crushed or diluted. Certain medications can be absorbed too quickly when altered, or they may become less effective or can make you sick. However, splitting pills can make some medications more affordable, and some have actually been approved for splitting. **The bottom line:** Take a medication as instructed in its prescribed form unless your doctor or pharmacist gives you the OK and further instructions to do otherwise.

Online Pharmacy Alert

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) urges caution when buying medication online. The danger lies with nonlicensed operations, incorrect diagnoses and personal privacy risks.

To help ensure your safety, use a Web site that (a) is properly licensed — go to the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy Web site, www.nabp.net, for Internet pharmacy verification; (b) has a licensed pharmacist to answer questions or help with problems; and (c) requires a prescription from your doctor or other health care professional licensed in the United States to write prescriptions for medication.

For Your Safety

... and the safety of those around you

STORE medication out of the reach of children (and pets).

KEEP medications in their original containers — childproof containers if small children are around.

FOLLOW a routine when taking your medications.

SEPARATE tubes of ointment from tubes of other products such as toothpaste or children's products.

USE what comes with the prescription or over-the-counter medication (for example the dosage cup or oral syringe). Don't use

one for another as the measurement markings and volume can vary even though they look similar.

NEVER take someone else's medication. It's dangerous. Drugs and dosages are usually individual and condition-specific in ways that may not be compatible with you.

DISCARD expired medications in such a way that they can't fall into the wrong hands.

Children and Medicine

Medications for children vary greatly from medications for adults. Two common mistakes are misreading the dosage recommendation and measuring incorrectly. Make sure you

know the correct dosage for your child's age and weight. Don't confuse measurements such as teaspoon (tsp) with tablespoon (tbsp) or microgram (mcg) with milligram (mg). **Tip:** Try measuring in "cc" units; ask your pharmacist

for help. If your child won't take a medicine, ask your pharmacist if you can mix it with applesauce or jam to mask the taste.

