



#55 in a series of Health Bulletins on issues of pressing interest to all New Yorkers

Taking Your Medicine

How to make it easier when your health – and your life – depend on it.

TOO MANY PILLS!
I CAN'T KEEP TRACK!

OH, NO,
I RAN OUT AGAIN!



- Available in Spanish, Chinese and Russian: call 311 or visit nyc.gov/health
- Disponible en español: llame al 311 o visite nyc.gov/health
- 需要中文服務 - 可電 311 或造訪網址: nyc.gov/health

Taking Medicine as Prescribed Can Be Hard!

- Do you have high blood pressure? High cholesterol? Diabetes?
- Has your doctor prescribed a medicine that you must take every day?
- Do you always take your medicine correctly? If not, you are not alone! Many people skip doses or make medication mistakes.



How to Make It Easier

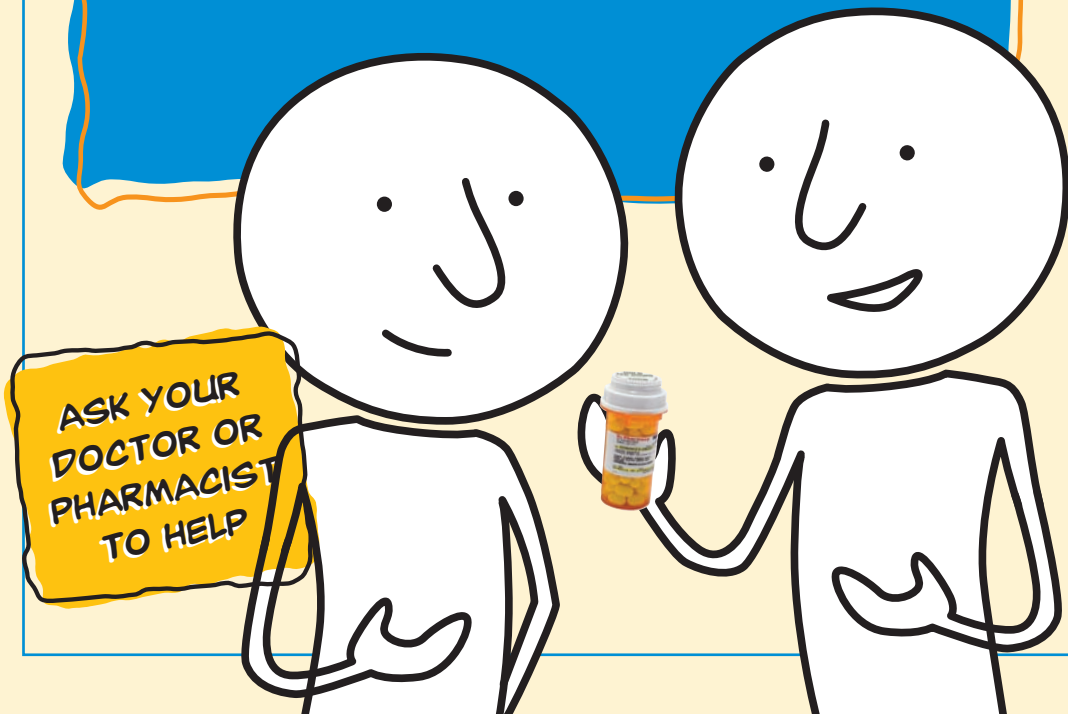
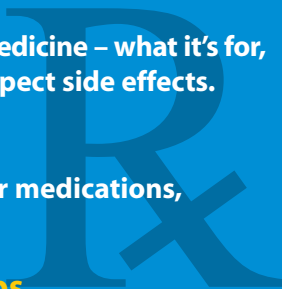
1. Have a regular doctor and a regular pharmacist.

- The better you know them, the easier it is to talk.
- Don't be afraid to bother them! Ask your doctor or pharmacist to help. It's their job.
- Don't say you're taking your medicine if you're not.
- Tell your doctor about every medicine you take, including over-the-counter drugs, vitamins and herbal remedies.
- Talk about alcohol and drug use.
- Learn as much as you can about each medicine – what it's for, how often to take it, and whether to expect side effects.

2. Reward yourself.

Every week that you remember all your medications, give yourself a treat.

3. Check out the chart for helpful tips.



KEEPING UP WITH DAILY MEDICATIONS

PROBLEM

WHAT TO DO

1. I don't think I need it.
I feel just fine.

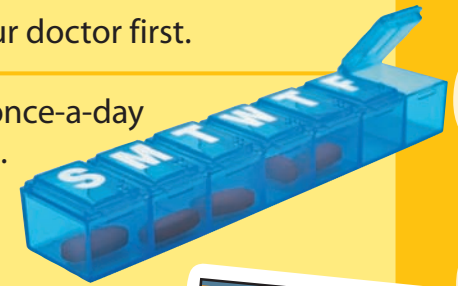
- Many conditions, such as high blood pressure and high cholesterol, damage your body even when you don't have symptoms.
- Don't stop taking your medicine unless you talk to your doctor first.

2. Too complicated!

Too many pills!
Too many schedules!
I can't keep track
of them all!



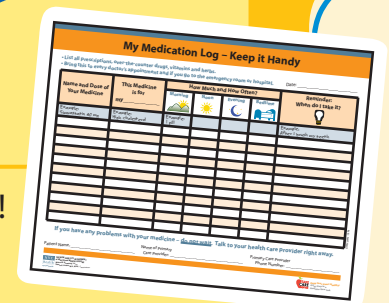
- Ask your doctor if any of your pills can be changed to once-a-day or long-acting forms (so you take fewer pills each day).
- Use a daily or weekly pillbox to organize medications.
- Put all your medicine bottles in a bag and bring them to your doctor to see if any are no longer needed.
- Call 311 or ask your doctor or pharmacist for a "Medication Log" that lists all of your medicines and when to take them.



3. I can't afford it.

This costs too much.
I'll just take less.

- No one should ever have to go without medicine to save money!
- Ask your doctor if your medication comes in a lower-cost generic form, or if you qualify for free medication. Many people do. (See More Information.)



Call 311 for a free
Medication Log.

4. I just can't remember.

I forget to order refills.
Or I run out when
I'm traveling.

- Don't run out! Ask your health plan if you can get up to 3 months worth of medicine at once.
- Many pharmacies or health plans have reminder programs, or will deliver or mail refills. Ask them.

5. This medicine isn't working.

I think it's making me sick. I feel
worse now than I did before.

- Tell your doctor right away. If medication is causing side effects, you can switch to a different one.
- But don't stop taking it unless your doctor or pharmacist tells you to.

6. I don't understand the labels.

I can't read them,
so I can't follow the
instructions.



- Many pharmacies can print labels in different languages, in larger print, or put pictures on the container.
- Call 311 or ask your doctor or pharmacist for a "Medication Log" that lists all your medicines and when to take them.

7. I'm embarrassed.

I don't want people to know
I'm taking medicine.

- Find a private space at work or home to take your medicine.
- Keep medications someplace only *you* have access to. (Just don't forget where you put them!).



Simple Ways to Help Your Medicine Work Better

Taking blood pressure medicine?

• Get your pressure down faster.

- Cut the salt! Eat a healthy diet rich in fiber and low in saturated fat. Eat fruits and vegetables every day.
- Get at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity (such as a brisk walk) at least 5 days a week.

• Check your own pressure.

- Many pharmacies have machines you can use for free.
- Home blood pressure monitors are easy to use. You can buy them at most pharmacies and department stores.
- Call 311 for a free blood pressure tracking card. Take the card with you every time you see your doctor.

Taking medicine to lower your cholesterol?

- Ask your doctor what your goal should be.
- Help your medicine work faster. Choose foods with 0 grams trans fat. Eat a diet low in saturated fat and cholesterol.

Do you have diabetes?

- Keep track of your A1C. For most people, the goal is less than 7%.
- Keep your blood pressure under control. Goal: less than 130/80.
- Know your LDL (“bad”) cholesterol and keep it low. Goal: less than 100 mg/dL.

More Information and Help

• American Heart Association:

www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=165
call 1-800-AHA-USA-1 (1-800-242-8721)

• Food and Drug Administration (FDA):

www.fda.gov/fdac/reprints/medtips.html

• Project Inform (focus on HIV medications):

www.projectinform.org/info/adherence/adherence.pdf

• Help to pay for medications:

Salud a Su Alcance Pharmacy Assistance Program (SASA-PAP)
www.nyp.org/services/pharmacy-assistance-program.html or call (212) 342-1617

• Help for reducing medication costs:

- NYCrx: a non-profit organization that makes safe and effective medication available at the lowest possible cost to New Yorkers. www.nycrx.org or call 1-866-MY-NYCRX (1-866-696-9272)
- Healthy New York: www.ins.state.ny.us/website2/hny/english/hny.htm or www.ins.state.ny.us/website2/hny/spanish/hnys.htm
- RxOutreach: www.rxoutreach.com or call 1-800-769-3880
- Elderly Pharmaceutical Insurance Coverage (EPIC) (for people 65 and older): www.health.state.ny.us/nysdoh/epic/faq.htm
- Bridges to Access: www.bridgestoaccess.com

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125 Worth Street, Room 1047, CN 33

New York, N.Y. 10013

Michael R. Bloomberg, Mayor
Thomas R. Frieden, M.D., M.P.H., Commissioner

Bureau of Communications

Geoffrey Cowley, Associate Commissioner
Cortnie Lowe, M.F.A., Executive Editor

Prepared in cooperation with:

Division of Health Promotion and Disease Prevention,
Bureau of Chronic Disease Prevention and Control
Cardiovascular Disease Prevention and Control Program



Taking Your Medicine How to make it easier

**DIAL
311**

For Non-Emergency New York City Services
Telephone Interpretation in More Than 170 Languages