Take your medications as prescribed

For millions of people who suffer from a chronic disease such as high blood pressure or diabetes, or from an occasional bacterial illness, taking prescription medication offers relief from symptoms and improves health.

As the number of prescription drugs continues to grow in the United States, the potential for problems also increases. When prescription drugs are not used as directed, they can cause serious problems by failing to relieve the symptoms, creating health complications, or even causing death.

Health care professionals are trying to improve the process of prescribing and delivering necessary medications to reduce the possibility of errors. Researchers reporting in the July 21, 1999, issue of JAMA found that including a pharmacist in the patient care team on rounds in the intensive care unit, where a high volume of drug prescriptions are administered, reduced medication errors.

THINGS TO DO:
- Take a prescription drug in the exact amount and schedule prescribed by your doctor.
- Call your doctor right away if you have any problems with your medicine.
- Inform your doctor about any other medicines (prescription or nonprescription) that you are taking and if you have any allergies to medicines or other medical conditions at the time a drug is prescribed.
- Be sure you understand all instructions about taking the drug before you leave your doctor’s office, and write down or ask for written instructions for future reference. Drug labeling information can change, so read the prescription label each time you fill it.
- Keep a record of all the medicines (prescription and nonprescription) you are taking. Keep a copy in your medicine cabinet and in your wallet; share the record with each new doctor you see.

THINGS NOT TO DO:
- Don’t demand any particular drug (such as antibiotics or medicines you may have seen advertised) from your doctor if your doctor explains why you don’t need them.
-When directed by your doctor to take a prescription drug, don’t stop taking a drug after a few days because you feel better or because you don’t feel better. Some drugs may provide immediate relief of symptoms, while other drugs take longer to show benefit. It is important to complete the full course of treatment for the drugs to be safe and effective.
- If you are considering stopping or stopping your medicine, contact your doctor.
- Never take any medicine that has been prescribed for someone else, and don’t give your prescribed medicine to anyone else.
- Do not consume alcoholic beverages with any medicine until you check with your doctor.
- If you are pregnant, do not take any medicine before checking with your doctor.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
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  202/347-6711 or 1-800/737-4487
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- Food and Drug Administration
  888/INFO-FDA or www.fda.gov
- The Medicine Program
  (for assistance in paying for prescription medicines)
  573/778-1118 (M-F 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. CT)
  or www.themedicineprogram.com

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