



Medication Side Effects

When you pick up your prescription and look at the list of potential side effects, do your eyes start to glaze over? When you get home, do you toss the medication insert in the recycling bin, too overwhelmed to do anything with it? You're not alone. Many people aren't sure what to do with all this information.

Vomiting, joint pain, liver damage. . . . How concerned should you be about side effects like these?

In truth, it's often difficult to predict who will have a mild or severe reaction—or none at all. Medications have different effects on different people. But just as you watch the weather report to prepare for a potentially severe storm, it's important to learn about and prepare for side effects that may—or may not—occur.

Here's what you can do.

The next time you get a prescription filled, take the time to ask questions about your medication's potential side effects, instead of signing away your opportunity for a consultation. Get clarification about that long list of potential side effects. Some are more serious than others. And, if there's a technical term you don't understand, don't be embarrassed to ask about it.

Here's a place to start.

- What are the most likely side effects? (Some are much more common than others.)
- What are steps I can take to manage minor side effects? (For example, taking medications with food or milk can sometimes ease gastrointestinal symptoms.)
- What are the warning signs of more serious side effects? (Not all side effects are directly apparent. For example, a tarry bowel movement might be the first sign of bleeding in your stomach.)
- When should I call the doctor? (As your pharmacist, I can help you pinpoint the signs that warrant a call to the doctor.)

What else can you do? It may help to get all prescriptions filled at the same pharmacy. That way, I can keep track of any medication reactions you've had in the past. In addition, provide your doctor and me a list of all prescription or over-the-counter medications, herbal products, and supplements you're taking. Let us know about any poor reactions you've had to medications in the past.

Keeping a medication diary may also be a good idea. While taking your medication, you write down any important information and share it with your doctor and me. We can help determine whether you've experienced a medication side effect or something else. In between visits, be sure to call one of us if you have a side effect and don't know what to do. Let us know if you've done anything to try to treat the problem, such as stopping the medication, skipping a dose, or taking an herbal remedy.

Remember: even if you take your medications exactly as directed, you may still experience side effects. Medications aren't risk-free. But they are approved for use when their benefits are considered greater than their risks. If you continue to be concerned, your doctor or I can help you weigh the risks of the medication against the benefits.



If you have any questions please feel free to contact me @ 873-3244 or mcglynnrx@tds.net

Thanks, Dan McGlynn