



Healthy Habits

Tips and resources for living well



Have a Chronic Condition? Use Your Medications Wisely

If you are being treated for diabetes, hypertension, asthma or another chronic condition, chances are that getting a new prescription can leave you with many questions about how it's supposed to help you, how you should take it, and more. Getting clarification from your doctor is an important first step to get the most benefit from your medications so they can help you better manage your condition. Follow these simple tips:

Pose these questions to your doctor.

- How is the drug expected to help?
- How long will I need to take it?
- What dose do I take and when should I take it (for example, two pills twice a day – does this mean one pill in the morning and one at night? Or two pills taken one time each day?)
- Do I take it with or without food?
- Are there any side effects? Are there any interactions with my other medications or supplements?
- What should I do if I skip a dose?
- Is there a generic version of this medication?

Be mindful of refills. Know when you are coming close to needing a refill to ensure that you have enough medication to cover the time you will wait until your prescription is ready.

Travel tip: make sure you have enough medication on hand to last the duration of your trip.

Make sure your filled prescription matches what your doctor ordered. Be sure to read the label and any instructions included with the medication.

Stick to your schedule! It can be helpful to keep a log or journal of when you take your medications to ensure you don't forget or take too much—or too little.

Use reminder aids like marking off on a calendar each time you take your medication. Or use pill boxes with days-of-the-week compartments that you can fill with your pills every Sunday for the upcoming week.

Keep a list of your medications handy. For each medication you are prescribed, include the name with exact spelling, dosage, how often you take it and when you take it. This is beneficial if you're prescribed medications from different doctors as well as if you're ever in an emergency situation. Include your pharmacy number, too. And be sure to take the list with you when you travel!

Find out if you can take a generic version. You'll save more money than taking a brand-name medication. For further cost-savings, find out if your health plan offers a mail-order prescription plan – you can get a three-month supply of your maintenance medication, which can save you money as well as trips to the drugstore.



Strive for 5 fruits and veggies every day

Fruits and vegetables are the foundation of a healthy diet—they provide you with essential vitamins, minerals and fiber. In fact, they should make up half your plate at each meal. While fruit and vegetable recommendations vary based on age, the general rule of thumb is for adults to eat at least 5 servings each day. However, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), only 1 in 10 adults eats enough fruits or vegetables. Ensuring you're eating enough fruits and vegetables can help reduce the risk of chronic diseases such as heart disease and type 2 diabetes as well as obesity. Try these tips to help add more fruit and veggie servings to your day!

Plan ahead – Make sure you have 5 servings readily available for the day. It can help to write down which fruits and veggies you're planning on eating at which meals. For example:

- Breakfast: Banana or strawberries (on your whole-grain cereal)
- Snack: Apple
- Lunch: Mixed green salad (topped with with grilled chicken)
- Snack: Sliced bell peppers and cucumber
- Dinner: Roasted broccoli as a side dish

Swap your spaghetti for a veggie – Spaghetti squash tastes delicious with pasta sauce. You can also use eggplant in lieu of lasagna noodles!

Keep fruits and vegetables accessible – Always make sure they're close at hand for an easy snack!

- Store them front and center in your fridge, freezer or pantry to ensure you see them first, rather than the unhealthier foods.
- Stash non-perishable fruit and vegetable products—like dried fruit, fruit cups or a can of 100 percent vegetable juice—in your desk at work.
- Always keep fruit readily available. Fruits like apples, bananas, pears, peaches and plums can stay out on your counter.

Drink a smoothie – They can be a great way to get more servings of fruits and vegetables. Don't rely on them as your sole source, as whole fruits and veggies provide more fiber.

Don't have the time to cook a fresh vegetable as a side to dinner? Opt for frozen. They can be just as good for you as fresh. When fruits and vegetables are harvested, they begin to lose their nutrients. In some cases, frozen produce may actually have greater nutritional value as it is picked ripe and immediately frozen, which preserves the nutrients.

Eat fruit for dessert – If you're a dessert-after-dinner person, rather than indulging in your usual favorite like cake or ice cream, swap it for a fruit.

Boost your breakfast – Drink a glass of 100 percent fruit juice every morning, such as orange, pineapple or apple juice. Similar to smoothies, it is important not to rely on juice as your sole source of fruits or veggies to ensure you're getting enough fiber and not overloading on sugar.



Important self-care tips for caregivers

While caring for a friend or family member who needs long-term help can be rewarding, it can also be overwhelming. Caring for a loved one can take a lot of time and energy, which means it's critical that you take good care of yourself. Many caregivers are so busy doing what has to be done for their loved one that they often put their own needs last on the list of priorities and don't make time for themselves. Taking care of yourself is crucial in order to maintain balance and stay healthy, which will help you provide the care your loved one needs.

Build a support team –You can't do it alone, so take some time to build your support team. This should include your loved one's doctor, family members, friends, church or community organizations, and anyone else you can turn to in a time of stress.

Connect with other caregivers – Check out online caregiving forums, websites and support groups to find others who truly understand the ups and downs of caregiving.

Get a checkup – You most likely are much more focused on your loved one's health than your own. But stress takes a toll on your immune system, so don't ignore your own health.

Eat healthy – Even if you don't feel hungry or think you don't have time to eat, try not to skip meals. Healthy food can help give you the energy you need during busy days. Keep healthy snacks like fresh fruits and vegetables available.

Fit in a workout – Research has shown that one of the best ways to manage stress is through exercise. Take some time out of your day and go for a 10-minute walk to clear your mind, fight stress and maintain good cardiovascular health.

Call it a night – It's important for you to get enough sleep so that you can be alert and awake to keep up with caregiving duties. If your caregiving responsibilities tend to interrupt your sleep, try taking a 15-minute power nap during the day.

Take a breath – Consider meditating, listening to guided relaxation recordings, or putting on relaxing music when things get stressful or tense.

Take a time-out – Take a little time for you— treat yourself to a stress-reducing massage or dinner out with a friend or family member.

Get help when you need it – Figure out what you can reasonably do and what resources or help from others you may need.