



Help them **help you!**

Ten Practical Tips for Properly Using Medication

1. Do not take medication for every little ache and pain.
2. Do not demand medication each and every time you see the doctor and pharmacist.
3. Be well informed: Your doctor and pharmacist know about medication.
4. Medication is very useful, but they can sometimes be harmful.
5. Make sure you follow the instructions on how to use the medication properly.
6. Respect the expiry date and bring back expired medication to your pharmacist.
7. The medication must be kept out of the reach of your children and grandchildren.
8. Your medication is as personal as your toothbrush!
9. Stocking up on medication is expensive and could be dangerous.
10. The key to success is good communication with your healthcare professionals (doctor, pharmacist, nursing staff, dentist).

To know more about Medication Council, visit the Council's Web site at www.cdm.gouv.qc.ca.



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1. Do not take medication for every little ache and pain.

Before taking medication every time you don't feel well, whether it be over the counter, a vitamin supplement or a natural health product, ask yourself whether it would be better to make a change in your lifestyle or whether another type of treatment, such as rest, healthy diet, physical activity or recreation would be better and more effective.

2. Do not demand medication each and every time you see the doctor and pharmacist.

Ask your doctor or pharmacist if another solution or approach may be as effective, appropriate and less expensive.

3. Be well informed: Your doctor and pharmacist know about medication.

It is risky to make your own diagnosis and treat yourself. However, certain symptoms or minor health problems can be relieved or treated by over-the-counter drugs. Do not hesitate to consult your pharmacist... he will know how to help you choose a product and will tell you the precautions to take or recommend that you see your doctor, depending on the case.

The most expensive medication is not necessarily the best. Medication with proven efficacy and well-known side effects may be right for you. New medication is often more expensive and sometimes has unknown long-term effects.

Generic drugs are just as effective as and usually less expensive than brand-name drugs. If both types of products are available on the market, you can choose either one, although you may have to pay extra for the brand name. Do not hesitate to talk to your doctor or pharmacist, who will be able to help you choose the most appropriate product for your condition.



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4. **Medication is very useful, but they can sometimes be harmful.**

Medication can help heal diseases or relieve symptoms, but they also have risks and may sometimes be harmful. It is important to know about the risks associated with each medication (for example, side effects and drug interactions) and to make sure that the benefits outweigh the risks before taking it.

5. **Make sure you follow the instructions on how to use the medication properly.**

If you are advised to take or prescribed a medication, do not hesitate to ask your healthcare professional about how to properly use your medication:

- Know the name of your medication, what it is used for and when it takes effect.
- Take the right dose at the right time.
- Know how long you must take your medication for.
- Find out whether the medication is compatible with your other health problems.
- Know about the adverse effects that may occur and what you should do if they occur.
- Know the specific precautions to take and possible interactions with food, other medications or natural health products that you are taking.
- Know what to do if you miss a dose or run out of medication.
- Know how to store your medication (e.g. at room temperature or in the refrigerator) and keep it in its original container.
- If you have trouble managing when to take your medication, there are tools, such as a schedule, medication organizers and pill boxes to make this task easier. Ask about them.
- Your pharmacist can give you a print-out of the information on the medication that you are taking. Just ask.



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6. Respect the expiry date and bring back expired medication to your pharmacist.

Your pharmacist knows how to dispose of expired medication in a way that is both safe and environmentally friendly.

7. The medication must be kept out of the reach of your children and grandchildren.

- Medication that is beneficial to you could be poisonous to a child.
- Keep medication away from humidity (avoid the washroom) in a closed cabinet out of the reach of children.
- Never tell children that medication is like candy.

8. Your medication is as personal as your toothbrush!

- Never give your medication to your friends or relatives.
- Even if your symptoms are similar to someone else's, never use another person's prescribed medication. What is good for one person may be dangerous for another depending on his age, weight, health condition or other drugs being taken.

9. Stocking up on medication is expensive and could be dangerous.

Drugs that must be taken regularly over several months are often prescribed for periods of four weeks, except in certain cases.

- This rule meets needs of safety and savings: risks of accidentally poisoning young children or wastage due to poor long-term storage are reduced.
- As well, your health may change over time; your dosage may even be increased or decreased, or you may be prescribed another product.
- There are however exceptions. If this is your pharmacist.



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10. The key to success is good communication with your healthcare professionals (doctor, pharmacist, nursing staff, dentist).

- When seeing a healthcare professional, bring a list with you of all the medication that you are taking, even if you only take them from time to time. This list should include:
 - Prescribed medications
 - Over-the-counter medications (cold syrups, laxatives, etc.)
 - Vitamins and food supplements
 - Natural health products
 - Drug allergies Your pharmacist will help you complete this list and could also provide you with a print-out... just ask.
- Keep your list of medication with you at all times. It is an important tool for your healthcare professionals, whether at a medical clinic, a local community services centre like a CLSC, the pharmacy or the hospital emergency department. It will help you better assess your state of health and determine which treatment is best. As well, it helps you avoid any allergy risks, drug interactions or being given a product that you are already taking.
- It is important to inform your doctor and pharmacist if you are seeing other professionals so that they can work together toward one single objective: ensuring your health.
- It's a good idea to jot down any questions that you want to ask your healthcare professionals when visiting them. You could talk with them to make sure you have thoroughly understood your treatment. By teaming up with them, you will help them help you. Together these professionals and you can work together toward your personal well-being.