

## Your medications and your health (Part 1)

### **Always ask about current and new medications.**

It is important for both you and your doctor to know what medications you take. It is important for you to understand why you take each of your medications. It is equally important for you to be comfortable but cautious asking your doctor about new medications that you see or hear about in advertisements on T.V., on the radio, or in printed materials. You need to remember that new medications that are advertised as “wonder drugs” can have serious side effects and complications for different people. Your physician may want to appear “up-to-date” and agree to “try you” on the new medication you are asking about. Being a new medication, there can be unknown side effects that were too rare to be noticed during initial testing. For this reason, when your physician does prescribe a new medication it is extremely important for you to bring any possible medication reactions to the physician’s attention. A good medication should give you the desired benefit without you otherwise knowing you are taking it.

If you and your doctor keep open communication going about your medications, you will be better prepared if you experience unusual reactions. The most important thing to remember is to always communicate with your physician about your current medication and any new vitamins, herbs or medications you add.

## Your medications and your health (Part 2)

### **Communication with Your Physician is Key?**

Medications are used to both treat and to prevent disease, but there are times when medications are inappropriately used for one reason or another. Some people may purposefully take inappropriate medications, but most of the time people unintentionally take the medication they do not really need. This is why it is always important for you to know what you are taking and why you are taking it. Plus, by knowing why you are taking certain medications you can be empowered to ask about other medications that may reduce side effects you are currently experiencing.

You also need to ask your physician about preventive medications. For example, a person with diabetes has an increased risk of kidney failure, but preventive medications can decrease this risk. Along these same lines, reducing the risk of disease is the major role of immunizations. So ask your doctor if you are up-to-date with your immunizations. Don't forget, open communication with your physician is key to better healthcare treatment and prevention.

### Your medications and your health (Part 3)

#### **Take Control of Your Health**

If you take an active role in your healthcare you'll be a healthier and happier person! Common sense tells us that if a doctor does not know what medications you are taking the doctor may prescribe a medication that may react with one of them. A recent study found differences existed in 115 out of 120 patients between what a patient said they were taking and what his or her doctor thought they were taking. Out of 1,390 medications patients reported taking, their primary care physician was unaware of 521 (37%). For an additional 10%, the dose the patient was taking and what their physician wanted them to be taking differed.<sup>1</sup>

Common sense tells most people too much or too little medication can be bad. Yet, of 158 adverse drug reactions that lead to a hospitalization, 80% had an abnormal drug concentration or laboratory value, and 33% of the people hospitalized were not taking their medication correctly.<sup>2</sup>

While nobody likes to be stuck by a needle, periodic blood tests are necessary for monitoring some medications. Talk with your doctor and make sure that both you and your doctor are aware of the medications you take, which ones need periodic blood test monitoring and find out how often these tests should be done.

1) [Frank C.,et.al; What drug are our frail elderly patients taking? Do drugs they take or fail to take put them at increased risk of interactions and inappropriate medication use?; Canadian Family Physician 47:1198 - 204, 2001 June]

2) [McDonald, PJ; Hospital admissions resulting from adverse drug reactions; Annals of Pharmacotherapy, 36(9):1331 - 6, 2002 Sep]