
Medication in hospital

Summary

- When you go to hospital, it is important to tell your doctor or nurse about all the medication you take.
 - Medication includes prescription and non-prescription (over-the-counter) medication, supplements (vitamins) and natural medicines (for example, herbs).
 - If you take regular medication at home, bring it with you to hospital.
 - During a hospital stay, your doctor will prescribe your medication for you and it will be given to you by your nurses.
 - In hospital, do not take any medicine unless it has been prescribed for you and given to you by hospital staff.
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When you go to hospital, it is important to tell your doctor or nurse about all the medication you take, including prescription and non-prescription (over-the-counter) medication, supplements (vitamins) and natural medicines (for example, herbs). Staff need to know what medication you take, because it can affect your health and care in hospital.

People take regular medication for many reasons. Often, as a person gets older, they may take multiple medications on a daily basis. Many admissions to hospital can be related to medication. As a normal part of medication management, talk to your doctor to make sure that each medication you take does not interact with any others you are taking. During a stay in hospital, this is just as important.

Taking medication in hospital

In hospital, it's important to let the staff know when you take your medication. This is so the hospital staff can keep track of what and how much medication you take.

Your medication can come from numerous sources, such as:

- different doctors and hospitals
- self-prescribed, over-the-counter
- medication for other conditions.

If you take regular medication at home, bring your medication to hospital, or have a family member or carer bring it from home. Give it all to your nurse or doctor to keep safe while you are in hospital.

Taking a lot of different medication increases the risk of side effects. Some types of medication can be harmful if they are taken together. In some cases, falls, confusion and incontinence can be caused by medication.

Tell hospital staff if you feel:

- confused or 'can't think clearly'
- unsteady while walking
- unwell or in pain.

If hospital staff know what medication you are taking, and when you have taken it, they can make sure your medication is managed and limit the risk of side effects.

Managing your medication in hospital

Always carry an up-to-date list of your current medications (the name of the medication, the dose, and when and why you are taking it). Give this list to your nurse or doctor.

Always ask your doctor or nurse about your medication. Questions to ask include:

- why your medication has been changed (if it has)
- what a new medicine is for, and if it is necessary
- what medication you need to take and how much
- why you are taking the medication.

You may be told to stop taking a medication. If this is the case, always ask why it is being stopped. Sometimes, this is because it is not necessary anymore or because it may do you more harm than good. It can often be better for you to take less medication.

What you need to know about your medication before you leave hospital

When you leave hospital, make sure you get:

- written information about your medication and any changes made
- an accurate and updated list of your medication – take this list with you when you see your doctor or other health professional.

It is important that you tell your doctor or nurse if you think you might need help taking any of your medications at home.

When you go home, tell your local doctor, pharmacist and any other health professionals you deal with about any medication changes that were made in hospital.

Where to get help

- Your **GP (doctor)**
- Nursing staff
- Allied health staff

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National Ageing Research Institute (NARI)

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