



Information on Medicines in English

English

Foreword

I am delighted to be able to welcome you to 'Information on Medicines in English'.

Bolton Clarke clients and carers come from diverse backgrounds and have diverse needs. We are committed to assisting all people to better manage their medicines to improve their health. We support this by providing free access to the 'Information on Medicines in English' talking book.

Using simple information sheets, 'Information on Medicines in English' presents information on how to better manage your medicines in a way that is easy to understand. You have the choice of reading the information or listening to it. You can also print individual pages or the whole book for future use. In total, 20 information sheets on five important topics are covered to help you better manage your medicines.

There have been many people involved in putting this important resource together. We would like to acknowledge and thank members of the Willum Warrain Aboriginal Association, the Spanish-speaking Planned Activity Group (run in partnership with the Southern Migrant and Refugee Centre and the Narre Warren North Baptist Church) and the Peninsula Advisory Committee for Elders. 43 community members participated in three focus groups to test the information.

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I hope that 'Information on Medicines in English' Talking Book helps you to better manage your medicines to improve your health.

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Note

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Why do we take medicines?

Understanding your medicines can help keep you well.

Medicines are used for different reasons. They can cure, stop or prevent disease. Medicines can also ease symptoms, such as pain.

Taking too much or not enough medicines can be bad for your health. They are a common reason why people are admitted to hospital.

To find out more about your medicines speak to your:

- Pharmacist.
- Doctor.
- Nurse.

For more information call the Medicines Telephone Service on 1300 633 424. Telephone interpreters are available.

For written information about medicines go to the National Prescribing Service website www.nps.org.au

Different types of medicines

There are different types of medicines.

Prescription medicines are medicines that you can only get with a prescription. You can only buy your medicine with a prescription at a pharmacy.

Over-the-counter medicines are medicines you can get without a prescription from pharmacies, supermarkets and other places.

Complementary medicines are natural and herbal medicines. They are also called traditional medicines.

All types of medicines can have an effect on how other medicines work. This is why it is important to talk about all the medicines you take when you speak to your:

- Pharmacist.
- Doctor.
- Nurse.

For more information call the Medicines Telephone Service on 1300 633 424. Telephone interpreters are available.

For written information about medicines go to the National Prescribing Service website www.nps.org.au

Use of complementary medicines

Complementary medicines are natural medicines such as:

- Herbs.
- Vitamins.
- Minerals.
- Traditional medicines.

Complementary medicines can be traditional health practices passed on through generations. Some are new treatments. These are often based on religious and/or cultural health beliefs.

All types of medicines can have an effect on how other medicines work. This is why it is important to talk about all the medicines you take when you speak to your:

- Pharmacist.
- Doctor.
- Nurse.

It is important to understand the risks of using complementary medicines:

- Instead of prescription medicines.
- Together with prescription medicines.

How can I find out more about my medicines?

It is important to have a good understanding of your medicines.

To find out more about your medicines speak to your:

- Pharmacist.
- Doctor.
- Nurse.

For more information call the Medicines Telephone Service on 1300 633 424. Telephone interpreters are available.

Medicine companies provide written information about the medicines they make. This is called Consumer Medicines Information.

Information is available for most prescription medicines and many over-the-counter medicines. The information sheets explain:

- How the medicine works.
- How and when to take it.
- How to store it at home.
- Common side effects and potential interactions.
- Possible outcomes of taking different medicines together.

For this information go to Consumer Medicines Information at www.medicines.org.au

You can print the information or ask your pharmacist or doctor to print it out for you.

Names of medicines

Buying medicines can be confusing. Different medicines companies make the same medicine but sell it under different names. For example, the medicine 'paracetamol' is packaged and sold as either 'Panadol', 'Herron' or 'Panamax'.

It is important to be aware that most medicines have different names:

Active ingredient name

The active ingredient name is the name of the chemical in the medicine that makes it work. These active ingredient names are scientific and often difficult to remember and say.

Brand name

Companies give their medicine another easier name, under which the medicine is sold.

There are also two types of brand names:

- Original brand.
- Generic brand.

Often the generic brand costs less than the original brand.

Speak to your pharmacist, doctor or nurse to check if the generic brand of the medicine is safe for you to use.

Why some generic brands of medicine should not be used

Sometimes your pharmacist will give you a choice between the brand you were prescribed and a generic brand. Generic brands usually have the same health benefits as the original brand.

At other times, you will not be offered a generic brand. Possible reasons for this are:

- For some medicines, different brands may have the same active ingredient but may have different added ingredients. This could change how your body may be affected. Your pharmacist can provide you with more information about this.
- For medical reasons your doctor may want you to take the original brand prescribed.

For more information about medicines go to Consumer Medicine Information at www.medicines.org.au

You can print the information or ask your pharmacist, doctor or nurse to print it out for you.

Cost of medicines

If you use a lot of medicines each year the cost can get very high.

You can save money by asking if there is a generic brand of your medicine. Your pharmacist may also offer you a cheaper brand for over-the-counter medicines.

For medical reasons your doctor may want you to take the original brand prescribed.

If you are an Australian resident with a current Medicare card, medicines can be cheaper for you. About 80% of prescription medicines in Australia are covered by the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme. This means you pay part of the cost of the medicine and the Government pays the rest.

Make sure you show your Medicare card to your pharmacist to get your medicine at the cheaper price. Many pharmacies keep a record of your Medicare number so you only have to show your card once.

If you are an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, you may be able to get medicines at a cheaper cost. Do not drink and drive.

Buying medicines from the internet

Buying medicines from the internet can be a good idea. Benefits may include cheaper prices, online home delivery and convenience. However there are scam websites and emails that can cause financial and health problems.

Some websites are 'fake', and may sell out-of-date, poor quality, contaminated or even fake medicines. Sorting out the 'real' websites from the 'fake' ones is not always easy. If you buy medicine from a website, you will also miss out on hearing safety advice from a health professional.

Therefore it is better to use a local pharmacy to buy your medicines. This is particularly important when you have a prescription for a new medicine or for a serious condition.

If you buy medicines from a website, here are a few suggestions you may want to think about:

- Buying medicine over the internet without talking to a pharmacist may put your health at risk.
- Medicines bought overseas may have different ingredients from the brand sold in Australia, even if the brand name is similar.
- Overseas medicines may not meet Australia's strict quality and safety standards.
- It is illegal for some medicines to be brought into Australia by post.

Sharing medicines with others

Sharing medicines with others can be bad for your health and theirs. Some people share medicines to help out family and friends who have the same health problem. Some people share medicines to save money.

We are all different. Our bodies react differently to medicines. Some people experience side effects with a particular medicine, but others don't. Your doctor will ask you many questions in order to prescribe the right medicines for you.

Remember

- Do not share your medicines with another person.
- Do not give away medicines that you no longer need to someone else.
- Do not accept medicines from another person.

If you want to know more about your medicines speak to your:

- Pharmacist.
- Doctor.
- Nurse.

For more information you can call the Medicines Telephone Service on 1300 633 424. Telephone interpreters are available.

For written information about medicines go to the National Prescribing Service website www.nps.org.au

Medicines list

A medicines list is a good way to keep all information about your medicines together. Always keep your list updated.

It is important to carry a list of your current medicines with you. A list will help others understand what medicines you are taking. If you become unwell, this list may save your life.

You can print a blank 'Medicines list' form from the National Prescribing Service website www.nps.org.au

You can also ask your family, pharmacist, doctor or nurse to print it for you. You can write your information on this form. You can choose to use a smart phone app, called MedicinesList+

Your medicines list should include:

- Name of medicine.
- What the medicine is for?
- What strength to use?
- When to use the medicines?

Your list should include all the medicines you are using. This includes prescription, over-the-counter and complementary medicines.

Storing your medicines at home

Storing your medicines in the right place at home is important.

Your medicines may not work in the way they are meant to if they are not stored correctly or are damaged.

Different medicines need storing in different ways. Instructions on how to store your medicines will be written on the packaging. Ask your pharmacist if you are unsure.

Store your medicines in a way that works best for you. Some people store all their medicines together in a bag. Other people store their medicines next to their bed.

Remember:

- Store your medicines in the packaging they came in.
- Store your medicines in a dry place.
- Heat and damp conditions can damage most medicines.
- Keep medicines out of reach of children and pets.
- Keep medicines away from direct sun light.
- Keep medicines away from heated areas, bathrooms and sinks.
- Do not leave medicines in cars.
- Some medicines need to be stored in the fridge.

Ask your pharmacist, doctor or nurse how to best store your medicines at home.

Medicine organisers

People take medicines at different times of the day. It is important that the right medicines are taken at the right time.

Many people use medicine organisers to help them with their medicines. They are sometimes called Webster packs or dosette boxes.

Medicine organisers store your tablets or capsules by day and time to help you remember to take the right medicine at the right time.

Medicine organisers are not suitable for some medicines, such as liquid medicines, injections and some tablets. Tablets you take 'only when needed' are not suitable for medicine organisers.

Medicine organisers can be filled by you, your family or a carer. Your pharmacist can also do this for you. There is a charge by the pharmacist for this service. Your filled medicine organiser can be delivered from the pharmacy to your home.

Speak to your pharmacist about how best to organise your medicines.

Questions you can ask your pharmacist, doctor or nurse

It is important you talk to your pharmacist, doctor or nurse so you can:

- Know your medicines.
- Keep a medicines list.
- Know how to take your medicines correctly.
- Know how to best look after yourself.

Here is a list of questions you may want to ask:

- What is this medicine for?
- Why am I taking this medicine?
- When should I take this medicine?
- How should I take it?
- Are there any special instructions relating to food?
- What side effects should I be aware of?
- What should I do if I experience a side effect?
- When do I see my doctor to review my medicines?
- What should I do if I miss a dose?
- How long do I need to take it for?
- Is it safe to have a different brand if the pharmacist offers it?
- Do I need to avoid taking other medicines with this medicine? (Including over-the-counter and complementary medicines)
- What is the active ingredient in this medicine?
- Is there anything I should stop doing while taking this medicine, for example driving?

When should my doctor review my medicines?

If you are taking many medicines and have concerns, your doctor can organise for a specialist pharmacist to come to your house and review your medicines. This Government program is called the 'Home Medicines Review Program'. This is a free service to you.

After the review, the doctor will talk with you about your medicines. The doctor may give advice and make changes, such as:

- Stop medicines you no longer need.
- Start new medicines you need.
- Make sure you are taking the right dose of medicine.
- Show you how to take your medicines correctly.
- Explain why and when to take medicines.
- Explain how medicines should be stored.
- What problems you should tell the doctor about.
- Check that prescription, over-the-counter and complementary medicine can be taken together.
- Explain any confusion with generic medicines.
- Explain ways to help you remember to take your medicines.

Stopping or starting new medicines

A review of your medicines by your doctor or a pharmacist may show that you no longer need all of them. It may also show that you need to start a new medicine.

Stopping medicines

Stopping a medicine can seem difficult, especially if you've been taking the medicine for a long time. Your doctor can recommend the best way to stop your medicines.

You may need to stop a medicine immediately because it is causing you harm. Some medicines may need to be stopped gradually by taking smaller doses. This is because stopping them suddenly may cause harm.

You should not stop taking a medicine to save money. Always discuss this first with your doctor.

Starting new medicines

For some people it is easier to remember to take a medicine when it is new. For others it can be hard to remember to add new medicine.

Speak to your pharmacist, doctor or nurse about:

- Taking new medicines.
- How to remember to take your medicines.
- Having large print labels on your medicines, if this is helpful.

Should I throw away old or unused medicines?

A review of your medicines by your doctor may show that you no longer need all your medicines. It may also show that you have old medicines that are out-of-date and medicines that you do **not** use. You should not keep these medicines.

You can give old and unused medicines back to your pharmacist. The pharmacist will get rid of your medicines through a free Government program called 'Return Unwanted Medicines'.

You should not throw away old medicines and medicines that you do not use. Doing this could cause damage to the environment.

You should not give old and unused medicines to anyone else. Doing this could harm other people's health.

You can call the Medicines Telephone Service, called 'Medicines Line' on 1300 633 424 for more information about getting rid of old or unused medicines. Telephone interpreters are available.

Written information about medicines is also available on the National Prescribing Service website www.nps.org.au

Taking many different medicines

The more prescription, over-the-counter or complementary medicines you take, the more likely you are to have medicine problems.

Taking many different types of medicines, especially 5 or more a day, can lead to medicine mistakes:

- People who are taking a number of medicines need to be especially careful not to confuse them. Some medicines look the same and have names that sound similar.
- Some combinations of medicines can cause problems.
- Some medicines can cause drowsiness, confusion, or memory problems. This can lead you to having a fall or other serious accident, or even being hospitalised.

To prevent problems with your medicines it is important to:

- Keep an updated list of your medicines.
- Keep going to the same pharmacist and doctor who know you and your medicines.
- Ask your pharmacist and doctor to review your medicines.
- Ask your pharmacist to print your medicines instructions in large print and provide them in your preferred language.
- Talk to your pharmacist or doctor about ways to organise, store and remember to take your medicines.

Ways to remember to take my medicines

We all forget to take our medicines sometimes. If you are often forgetting your medicines there are some simple things you can do to help yourself.

Set up a routine. Make sure you store your medicines in the same place and take them at the same time each day.

Other ideas are:

- Use regular activities and prompts to remind you to take your medicines. For example, take your morning medicines with breakfast.
- Use a calendar to mark when you have taken your medicines.
- Use a medicines app on your smart phone, or an alarm clock as a prompt.

Remember:

- Taking more medicines than recommended can be bad for your health.
- Taking fewer medicines than recommended can be bad for your health.
- Ask your pharmacist, doctor or nurse what to do if you forget to take your medicine or if you take too much.

You can also call the Medicines Telephone Service, called 'Medicines Line' on 1300 633 424. It provides you with information on different types of medicines. If you need an interpreter call 131 450. There is no cost for the telephone interpreting.

Can I get help with taking medicines at home?

There are services available to help you with taking your medicines at home. This can help you stay healthy and keep you living at home.

If you need help to take your medicines speak to your pharmacist, doctor or nurse. They can refer you to services to help you with your medicines at home. You can get help from a personal care worker who can support you to take your medicines. You can also get help from a home visiting nurse who can give you your medicines.

You, your family or carer can also get information about help to take your medicines at home from 'My Aged Care'. This is an Australian Government service. My Aged Care helps you find the information you need about aged care services.

You can read information on the website www.myagedcare.gov.au

You, your family or carer can also call the My Aged Care contact centre on 1800 200 422. If you need an interpreter to speak with the My Aged Care contact centre, call 131 450. There is no cost for the telephone interpreting.

Information for families, carers and friends

A family member, carer or friend may be supporting an older person with taking their medicines at home.

To help you with this, you can:

- Talk to the pharmacist.
- Visit the doctor with the person.
- Ask for a home medicines review.
- Find information on the Consumer Medicines Information website www.medicines.org.au

You can also contact the My Aged Care Gateway or the Carer Gateway. These are both Australian Government services:

My Aged Care helps you find information about different types of aged care services, such as home nursing and help with your personal care. You can call the My Aged Care contact centre on 1800 200 422.

Carer Gateway helps carers find the information and services you may need. Family or friends who are caring for an older person can call the Carer Gateway contact centre on 1800 422 737.

If you need an interpreter to speak with the My Aged Care Gateway or the Carer Gateway contact centre, call 131 450. There is no cost for the telephone interpreting.

How to contact us:

boltonclarke.com.au

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