Manage Your Meds

Check out these nine medication management tips.

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Cancer treatment can mean having to take many different medications, including oral therapies and drugs to help with side effects. Here's how to keep track of all your meds so you always take the right dose at the right time.

Start by storing information about each of your prescriptions, over-the-counter medications and supplements in one place. Include each drug's generic and brand name, descriptive details like size and shape, why you're taking the med, who prescribed it and when, how it's taken and any side effects it causes. Ask your treatment center for a form to fill out, or use a template like the American Cancer Society's "My Medicines Form." Prefer using a smartphone? Download a free app that tracks medications. Input all your prescription information, including your doctor's specific instructions, set refill alerts and learn about potential side effects and drug interactions.

Next, organize your pills, capsules, tablets and other medications in an inexpensive pill organizer, available at most drugstores. If you're taking many medications, ask your pharmacy to presort them into multidose packages. Medications that you take at the same time will be packaged together and labeled with the date and time to take them. (However, it's still a good idea to track them yourself so you can discuss issues with your medical care team.)

Traveling? Always pack your meds in your carry-on luggage. Keep liquid medications in their original packaging with the prescription label to avoid problems with airport security. If it's inconvenient to carry pills in their original containers, take photos of the labels with you, along with your doctor's and pharmacy's contact information. In addition, don't forget to account for time zone changes! Finally, pack a few extra days' worth of medication in case of unexpected delays.

9 Medication Management Tips

1. Talk to your prescribing doctor about all your medications, side effects and interactions.
2. Tell your medical care team about any over-the-counter medicines and supplements you're using.
3. Track your meds and supplements with a spreadsheet or an Update regularly.
4. Track your side effects and discuss them with your doctor.
5. Fill all your prescriptions at the same pharmacy.
6. If you have only a few prescriptions, use a pill organizer to sort your doses.
7. If you have many meds, ask your pharmacy for presorted multi-dose packaging.

8. When traveling, pack your meds and prescription info in your carry-on bag.
9. Stay on top of refills—set alarms, and request automatic refills.

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