

MANAGING YOUR MED LIST

One of the first things your new or long-time physician will ask at each visit is to review your medication list for accuracy. It is one of the mandates of the ACA ("Obamacare").

It is vitally important that you stay on top of your meds. Consequences of not doing so could lead to non-compliance of a prescribed treatment, dangerous interactions, unsafe indications, grave allergic reactions, potential side effects and duplication.

As all of those scenarios could end up costing you significantly from a financial point of view, it is prudent that you spend some time and efforts getting it under control. When an estimated 3/4 of patients do not take their prescriptions as indicated, this poor compliance with treatment costs the country billions of \$ each year.

Here are some tips to help you list your medications and manage your list.

1. Keep a Journal

First go to your cabinet or tray, and index every bottle, pill and box you see. Divide them into "prescription" and "over the counter", and indicate next to each its indication (reason or diagnosis for taking it), dosage, prescribed use (PRN or "as needed", or at specific times of day), frequency of use (times in a day and times in a week), name of the MD who prescribed it, and how long you have been taking it.

For a template, visit:

<http://www.fda.gov/downloads/AboutFDA/ReportsManualsForms/Forms/UCM095018.pdf>

Think of keeping a Pill Card on you at all times, especially if suffering from a serious condition. Use a laminated index card, or use the template at <http://www.ahrq.gov/patients-consumers/diagnosis-treatment/treatments/pillcard/pillcard.html>

Now is also a good time to indicate each medication price, as well as whether it is a generic or brand. When you can, won't it be fun to check for generic versions of a drug, or shop around for cheaper alternatives? Saving \$ is never a waste of time.

2. Ask your Pharmacist

Don't recall what those yellow gel caps in your travel pillbox or those blue pills in the box without a label are for? Your pharmacist should be able to help you identify them and find out from your purchase history if they are expired, and what their use is for.

He can also give you instructions on how to dispose of them properly if necessary.

3. Don't forget Supplements

Supplements, vitamins, herbal remedies, Chinese-medicine tonics, natural therapies and other similar preparations may interfere with some prescribed treatments, lower drug effectiveness or cause side effects. Include them on your list, especially if taken for a specific medical condition.

Check them out at:

http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/druginfo/herb_All.html or

<http://www.webmd.com/vitamins-supplements/default.aspx>

4. Consult your insurance records

Your insurer keeps on file a detailed and accurate list of all the prescriptions you have filled under your policy, as well as where and when. You may request a print-out or download a list via the website. This is also a good way of looking at pricing, and how prices vary by place of purchase.

5. Question refills

Unless you have Medicare Part D, and must now approve every refill before it is automatically dispensed, the refill process will likely bypass you, and more often than you think your physician as well. A well-oiled machine, it may not need to be approved by your doctor if the original order covers that refill.

Because a prescription has a refill status open for many months, or even unlimited, does not mean you should automatically get it. If your condition has improved, if your symptoms are gone, or if they are worse, is when a call or visit to your physician is advisable. Do you still need the drug? at the same dosage or frequency? should you switch to a better or more appropriate medication?

6. Use Apps

In these days and age, technology is everywhere. Apps help us keep that med list up-to date, remind us to take a pill or let us know a refill should be called in. They can also transmit updated prescriptions or new information to physicians electronically. These apps (listed here are those with high reviews), are also helpful at keeping track of dosages and use when we are not a home.



My Medications from the AMA - iTunes app store
Store, carry and share your medical information.



Pill Monitor by Maxwell Software - iTunes app store
Great for setting different alarms, it allows you to take pictures of your medications, and emails your med list, current and detailed, to your physician.



Mango Health - iTune app store

Learn more about every medication or supplement you take, get rewards and discounts by adhering to your schedule, manage your schedule easily. This app is geared to help you be more compliant with your treatment.

In Conclusion:

If you have not yet, do make this med list a priority. Even if you are not under active treatment, you might still want a list of supplements and over the counter medications you use. An efficient and up-to-date management is an easier task, and may well save you dollars and health issues.

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