



recovery

TOOLS FOR

Be Good to Yourself: Tips for Those Who Take Medication

If your doctor suggested you to take medicine to help you with a mental health problem, it's important to be informed. Many things can affect how well your medication works for you. Smoking, alcohol and drug use, over the counter medication and even the food you eat can change the effectiveness of your medications.

The following are some general suggestions. For more complete information, talk with your doctor, therapist or pharmacist.

TAKE YOUR MEDS - Don't stop taking your medication, even if you feel better. If you stop, your problems or symptoms may return. You could even become worse and end up in the hospital.

DON'T IGNORE SIDE EFFECTS If your medication makes you feel bad, talk with your doctor. Some medications need time to get the best results. Your doctor may also want to try another medication with fewer side effects or suggest ways to manage the side effects.

ALWAYS KEEP A SUPPLY OF MEDICINE - Running out of medicine (even for a few days) is bad for your health. Call to make a doctor's appointment at least two weeks before you run out. Don't wait until the last minute or the doctor may not be able to see you in time.

ASK IF YOU DON'T KNOW - It's important that you understand how to

take the medication. Make sure you know how much, what time of day, and whether or not you should take your medication with food. If you don't know, ask your doctor.

DON'T TAKE ANOTHER PERSON'S MEDICATION - What works for a friend may not work for you. It can even harm you. Only take medicine that is prescribed for you.

We've also listed some special measures you should take if you are taking certain medications.

ANTI-PSYCHOTIC MEDICATION (Newer ones include *Clozaril, Olanzapine, Risperdol* and others. Older ones include *Prolixin, Mellaril, Thorazine*, and others) Always avoid alcohol. Most of these drugs make you tired or sleepy. Drinking alcohol increases the drowsy effect. Large amounts of caffeine (contained in coffee, tea, colas, chocolate and some over the counter medicine) can make these medications less effective.

MOOD STABILIZERS (*Lithium, Depakote, Tegretol*) With Lithium, use caffeine and salt in moderation. Changes in caffeine or salt intake can change your blood level. Dehydration puts you at greater risk for Lithium toxicity. Lithium toxicity happens when the drug builds up in your body. Avoid dehydration by drinking lots of fluids (6 to 8 glasses of water per day). If you are taking Depakote or Tegretol, taking a multivitamin may help your body use the medication. This is

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a healthy habit for anyone on medication.

ANTI-ANXIETY MEDICATIONS (*Xanax, Valium, Librium, Tranxene, Serax* and others). You should never drink alcohol if you are taking medication for anxiety or panic disorders. Drinking alcohol can put you at risk of overdose or even death. Taking too much caffeine also causes these drugs to work less effectively.

ANTIDEPRESSANTS (Newer ones include *Prozac, Zoloft, Paxil*, and others. Older ones include *Tofranil, Elavil, Sinequan, Nardil, Parnate* and others) Alcohol can interfere with the action of these medications. Some also cause dry mouth and constipation. Gum helps with the dry mouth. Eating leafy vegetables, whole grains and fresh fruits and vegetables will help to avoid constipation.

OTHER THINGS TO REMEMBER - Most medication for mental health problems makes people very sensitive to the sun. When the weather is very hot, try to stay indoors. If you have to be outside, drink plenty of fluids (6 to 8 glasses of water a day) and always use sunscreen. Most medicines for mental health problems do not mix well with alcohol or street drugs. You should always avoid alcohol and street drugs.

These are only general guidelines. If you are having side effects from the medication, take action by informing your care manager, therapist or doctor. Some side effects are only a nuisance, while other side effects can be dangerous. If you believe you are having a medical emergency related to your medication, call your doctor immediately or call the Customer Service Line at 1-888-251-7511.



1-888-251-7511

ValueOptions New Mexico believes that people can and do recovery from mental illness. That is why we created *Tools for Recovery*. *Tools for Recovery* is a series of tip sheets that are written by and for consumers about issues, opportunities and obstacles people face in their recovery from mental illness. Other tip sheets in the series "*Managing Mania*" "*Dealing with Depression*," and *Handling Anxiety*. These tip sheets are available through your mental health center or by calling the ValueOptions New Mexico Customer Service Line at 1-888-251-7511.