

NPS

medimate

For medicines without the mix-ups



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Why you need to know about your medicines

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Knowing your medicines will help you:

- get better results from the medicines you take
- avoid side effects where possible
- enjoy better health.

Inside Medimate you will find tips for getting the information you need, as well as space to write down what you need to find out or remember.

A tear-off form is included at the back so you can list all your medicines.

Take Medimate with you when you go to your doctor or pharmacist or to hospital. Use it to help you get the information you need.



Medicines come in many forms, including tablets, liquids, inhalers, drops, patches, creams, suppositories and injections.

You get medicines from:

Health professionals

- such as doctors, pharmacists, dentists and nurses.

Medicines may be obtained on prescription, or recommended by a pharmacist.

Alternative practitioners

- such as homeopaths, naturopaths or herbalists.

Or you may choose medicines yourself from

- pharmacies (or chemists)
- health food shops, for example vitamin supplements or herbal or natural medicines
- supermarkets, for example some pain-killers and antacids.

**Get to know
all your medicines**
so that you can
get the best out of them
and avoid problems.

You may need more than medicine

Talk to your doctor or pharmacist about what you can do to improve your health

- instead of using a medicine
- as well as using a medicine.

They may recommend such things as:

- healthy eating
- increasing your physical activity—for example, by walking or swimming
- quitting smoking
- some other form of treatment, such as physiotherapy or counselling.

You may benefit by doing one or more of these things without using a medicine, or in combination with a medicine. For example healthy eating and increased physical activity will help you get the most benefit from a cholesterol-lowering medicine.



Be an active partner in choosing your medicines

- You know about your health and your likes and dislikes—such as when you wake up and go to bed, and when you have meals. Share this information with your doctor or pharmacist. They can then work with you to choose the best medicine for you.
- Ask questions. Keep asking until you get the information you need.
- Before you choose a medicine yourself, find out as much as you can about how it works, what effects it has, and whether you can take it with other medicines.
- Ask if a Consumer Medicine Information leaflet (CMI) is available for the medicine you are using (see page 9 for details).



All medicines have benefits and risks. To make sure you get the best medicine, tell your doctor or pharmacist about:

- the health problem you are having
- other health problems you may have
- all the other medicines you are using, including natural and herbal medicines and any medicines from the supermarket or pharmacy—it is not safe to use certain medicines together
- any allergies you have
- any problems you have had with any medicines in the past
- whether you are pregnant, breastfeeding, or if there is a chance you may become pregnant while using the medicine
- your preferences and choices—can you choose between tablets and capsules? Is the same medicine available at a cheaper price?

What I need to tell my doctor or pharmacist

Questions to ask your doctor and pharmacist

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Write down the things you need to ask before you see your doctor or pharmacist. Take the list with you on your next visit. Make sure you have time to get the information you need by making a longer appointment with your doctor or, if possible, visiting your pharmacist during quieter hours (ask when these are).

Ask what the medicine is for

- Why am I using this medicine?
- When will I start to see changes in my health?

Ask how to use the medicine

- How much should I use?
- What times of the day should I use it?
- What should I do if I forget to take a dose?

Ask when to stop using any of your medicines

- Do I have to finish all of the medicine, or just use it until I feel better, or keep using it for a long time?
- When I start using a new medicine, should I stop using any of my others?

Ask about special instructions

- Are there any special instructions for using this medicine? For instance, do I take it before or after meals?
- If I have to use a special device (puffer/spacer/patch/suppository), what is the correct way to use it?

Ask about side effects

- What side effects do I need to watch for?
- What should I do if I get a side effect?

Ask what to do, and not to do, while using the medicine

- Are there any medicines I should not use at the same time as this medicine?
- Can I drink alcohol when using this medicine?
- Do I need monitoring or testing? For example, do I need to keep a symptom diary or measure my blood sugar?
- How often do I need to have my medicines reviewed?
- How should I store this medicine?

Important information I need to remember

If you would like **printed information** about your medicine to take home and read in your own time:

- ask your doctor or pharmacist for a Consumer Medicine Information leaflet (CMI)
- go to www.medimate.org.au on the internet where you can also find CMI leaflets.

CMI leaflets are available for all prescription medicines and some medicines that you buy without a prescription at the pharmacy.

CMI leaflets provide easy to understand information, including:

- what the medicine is for
- things to consider before using the medicine
- how to use the medicine
- possible side effects and what to do if they occur.



When you choose a medicine yourself

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Find out if it is the best medicine for you

When you choose a medicine yourself from the **pharmacy, supermarket or health food store**, you need to be sure it's the best medicine for you.

Don't guess—get advice

- Ask a pharmacist for advice about the best medicine for you.
- Read the label and packaging.
- Read the Self-Care cards available in most pharmacies.
- Talk to your doctor about all the medicines you use.
- If you buy a medicine in a pharmacy, ask if there is a CMI leaflet available.

Let your doctor or pharmacist know what you are using.

All medicines, including herbal and natural medicines, can cause unwanted effects and may interact with other medicines.

The benefits and risks of herbal and natural medicines are often based on traditional use and they may not have been tested in the same way as prescription medicines.

Keep a list of these medicines, along with your prescription medicines, in the Medicines List at the back of this booklet so that you can let your doctor or pharmacist know what you are using.

Side effects

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Find out about side effects. Medicines can sometimes cause unwanted effects. Most of these are not serious but some can be. If you are at all concerned, talk to your doctor or pharmacist.

When you get a new medicine, find out:

- what the side effects could be
- any problems to watch out for
- what to do if a side effect occurs
- how soon you need to act.

You may be able to avoid or manage some side effects by planning ahead. For example, taking some medicines with food may reduce stomach upsets. If a medicine makes you sleepy, make arrangements so you don't have to drive or operate machinery.

A note on storage: Store medicines away from heat and damp because they can damage most medicines. Do not store medicines in the bathroom or near a sink. Do not leave your medicines in a car. Always keep out of reach of children.



Take special care to reduce the risk of problems

- Know the names of your medicines, and what they look like.
- Record details of your medicines, including why you are using them; use the Medicines List at the back of this booklet.
- Read the Consumer Medicine Information leaflets and keep them handy for future reference.
- Ask your pharmacist for advice on special packaging—such as 'dosette boxes' or 'webster packs'—to help you separate your medicines into the times and days you need to use them.
- Take out-of-date or unused medicines to your pharmacy for safe disposal.

Have your medicines reviewed

See your doctor every six to twelve months to have your medicines reviewed. Ask whether you should stop taking your medicines or change the dosage.

Ask your doctor or pharmacist whether a Home Medicines Review would be useful to help you avoid problems with your medicines.

Get the information you need:
Talk with your doctor or pharmacist at each visit. Ask for suggestions for other ways to keep your medicines organised.

Where to get more information

Call the NPS Medicines Line

Ask your doctor and pharmacist for as much information as you can. But if you need more information—about doses, side effects, interactions with other medicines, medicines and children, pregnancy and breastfeeding—speak to a pharmacist at:

NPS Medicines Line
1300 888 763
Monday to Friday 9.00 am to 6.00 pm Eastern Standard Time for the cost of a local call.

This is not an emergency service. If your call is not answered, leave a message and your call will be returned.

Internet information

www.healthinsite.gov.au
Health*Insite* is sponsored by the Australian Government and provides quality information on a range of health topics.
www.medimate.org.au
Part of the website of the National Prescribing Service (NPS), an independent organisation promoting Quality Use of Medicines.

Support and self-help organisations

Health support and self-help organisations can also give you helpful information. Check your local community listings, the Yellow Pages or ask your doctor, pharmacist or other health professional for advice on groups that can help you.

Emergency contact numbers

Write the names and phone numbers of your doctors, specialists, pharmacists and any other people you might need in an

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

The information in Medimate is to help you find out more about your medicines. In an emergency:
• phone your doctor immediately • go to your nearest hospital emergency department • or dial 000 to call an ambulance.
NPS is an independent, Australian organisation supporting Quality Use of Medicines. Medimate is funded by the Australian Government.



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Provides a national voice for health consumers.

