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Taking Medications

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No one likes taking medication. I remember the first time my doctor told me I needed to take a certain medicine for the rest of my life. I suddenly found myself rebelling against the prescription – even though I am a physician myself and have written thousands of prescriptions! My guess is that you probably feel the same way as me.

That is why it's best for you to be on the least amount of medications that it takes to accomplish its purpose. Most likely, you are taking medications to help relieve your pain and other symptoms of your disease. And you are probably on some other medications for reasons unrelated to that condition. Your health care team will be working together to make sure that you are receiving the best medications at the correct doses. However, it is very important that you communicate with them so that your medications do their very best for you.

- Know the names of your medications, what they are used for, the dose of each medication, and how often you should be taking them. Keep a list of these by your bedside or by the medication bottles. When you visit your physician, take this list and all of your medication bottles with you.
- A pillbox is helpful for people who are on more than a couple of medications a day. Unless you are using a pillbox, keep all medications in their original labeled container.
- Let a member of your health care team know if you are having problems taking your medications at the times they are scheduled. They can help you adjust the schedule or get your medication changed to better fit your lifestyle.
- Know the common side effects of each medication you are taking. If you experience any unusual or bothersome symptoms or side effect, please let a member of your health care team know as soon as possible.
- Know what to do if you miss a dose. In general, if you miss a dose of your medication at the scheduled time, take it as soon as you remember. However, if it is almost time for your next dose, skip the missed dose and return to your regular medication schedule. Call your doctor if you are not sure. Do not double up on your medication.

- Never take someone else's medication.
- Some medications interact with other medications. Please make sure your health care team is aware of **all** medications you are taking. This includes over-the-counter medications such as vitamins, headache, cough, cold and sinus medications, natural products, and dietary supplements.
- Don't chew, crush, or break any capsule or tablets unless the medication label instructions or a member of your health care team tells you. Some long-acting medications are absorbed too quickly when chewed. Other medications won't work if you crush them and they could even make you sick.
- Turn on the light to make sure you can clearly see what you are doing when you take your medications. Do read the label every time to make sure you have the right drug and that you are following the instructions.
- When being given a new medication, ask if this medicine is replacing anything else you were taking?
- Be aware that sometimes the medication you are prescribed may be used for a different purpose than the one described in the pharmacy literature. For example, many doctors use depression and seizure medications to treat certain types of pain. Please discuss any questions regarding the use of medication with your doctor.
- Medications should be stored in a cool, dry place out of reach of children. Only refrigerate medications if the label says to do so.
- Medications prescribed for you should not be given to any other person. You are responsible for the safekeeping of all medications in your possession. In the event that a medication is missing, stolen or destroyed, your doctor may request additional information and documentation (e.g., a police report) in order to replace the medication.
- Medications that are no longer being used should be discarded. Talk with a member of your health care team about how to properly dispose of these medications.