

Tips on Getting the Most from Your Psychiatric Medications



Key Points:

- *Take the medication every day.*
- *Be patient!* Many medications take 3-8 weeks to work, so it's very important to continue taking the medication (even if you don't feel better right away). Some disorders may take longer to respond, so ask your provider if you have concerns about your specific medication.
- *Do not stop taking the medications when you feel better.* Suddenly discontinuing some drugs can be dangerous and can cause your distressing symptoms to return. Rather, talk with your provider about your desire to safely decrease or change your medications.
- *Do not share medications.* Do not give other people your medications or use anyone else's medications.

Memory Tips:

- Using a pillbox can be helpful.
- Take medication at the same time every day. It might help to take it when you do something else every day (such as every morning when you brush your teeth).

Side-Effects:

- If you ever feel you are experiencing a life-threatening reaction, call 911 or go to the emergency room immediately. If you believe you are a danger to yourself and/or others (thinking seriously about suicide or harming someone else), call 911 or go to the emergency room.
- Many side-effects improve the longer you take the medication.
- Write down side-effects caused by your medication, and talk to your provider about them. There may be a different drug with fewer and/or more tolerable side-effects that can work for you.
- If your provider/pharmacist has told you to take the medication with food, be sure to eat at least a few crackers to avoid an upset stomach.

Drug Interactions:

- Do not drink alcohol or use street drugs. Do not take over-the-counter medications without asking your provider or pharmacist first. Using these substances can be dangerous and prevents your medications from working.
- Whenever you receive a prescription for a new medication, inform your provider or pharmacist of your current medications and other things you take (such as vitamins, food supplements, natural products, etc.).

Final Hints:

- Ask your provider about the availability of therapies and/or classes that may be helpful. Research has shown that a combination of medication and therapies provides the quickest and most lasting treatment for many conditions. Participating in therapy can require extra time and effort on your part, but the benefits are often great.
- Finding a medication that's right for you requires patience and teamwork between you and your provider. Sometimes the first medication you try may not be the best match for your symptoms. So, open and regular communication with your provider is very important!
- A website that provides helpful information about medications is:
www.safemedication.com



Ambulatory Mental Health Clinic (405) 270-5183
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OKC VAMC Emergency Room (405) 270-0501
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