



Medicines

- Your GP doctor or Specialist may prescribe medicine for you by giving you a prescription – a piece of paper that says what medicine you need to take and how often.
- You need to take this prescription to the pharmacy and give it to the pharmacist. They will then prepare the medicine so you can buy it there and they will explain how to use the medicine, any sickness to watch out for and how much the medicine costs.
- The prescription the doctor gives will tell the pharmacist whether you will need to have extra of some medicines – like the ones that you need to keep taking all the time e.g. for diabetes or high blood pressure. This saves you having to go back to the doctor every month for a new prescription for this medicine. These are called 'repeats'. The pharmacist will give you a copy of this and you can use it when you need the next lot of medicine. Keep it in a safe place so you can use it again and so you don't run out of medicine.
- You can use an interpreter at the pharmacy. Just ask them to call an interpreter on the telephone and tell them your language. Pharmacists can use interpreter services for free. They just ring 13 14 50 and request an interpreter in your language. It only takes a few minutes.
- Your pharmacist may ask you if you want a cheaper or generic brand medicine. Many medicines are available in a number of brands and the prices between those brands may vary. Generic brand medicines contain exactly the same ingredients in the same strength and have been tested to make sure they work

exactly the same as the brand. You might have to pay extra for the brand medicine or say yes to the generic brand and you might save some money.

- Sometimes the generic brand packet might look different to the one you had before, or the tablets are a different colour. You can check this with the pharmacist and they can get an interpreter to explain it to you also.
- You can take your old packet with you to the pharmacy – especially if the interpreter has written on it or you have marked it in some way so you know when to take it - and show it to the pharmacist. This can help them explain it to you.
- If you have a Healthcare Card or a Pension Card please show it to the pharmacy worker when you are giving them your prescription. This might make the medicine cheaper for you.
- If you or your family will need a lot of prescription medicines in one year, you can ask your pharmacist about registering for the “safety net” that can help you with the costs after you have spent a certain amount. Your pharmacy can help you register for the safety net.
- Ask the pharmacist to explain to you if you want to know about common side effects or sickness that can sometimes happen when taking the medicine or whether the medicine might react with any herbal medicines you are taking.
- You can buy some tablets, creams and liquid medicines from the pharmacy without a prescription like paracetamol for pain and fever and other medicines for colds. You cannot use any healthcare card or pension card for these.

Taking Medicine

Instructions for taking the medicine are written on the label stuck onto the medicine bottle. If you do not read English, ask your pharmacist to use a telephone interpreter to explain how to take medicine. It is good to tell someone else the instructions straight away so there is someone else who knows how you must take your medicine.

You might ask an interpreter to write on it the packet or you can mark the packet / bottle in some way so you know what it is for and when to take it e.g. 2 red dots = heart medicine, take twice a day.

When taking medicine:

- DO NOT take medicines that have been prescribed by a doctor for someone else. They could make you VERY sick.
- DO NOT use medicines that are old and that are past the expiry date (you can ask the pharmacist to show you the expiry date when you are buying the medicine)
- DO NOT give medicines that the doctor prescribed for you to someone else including overseas relatives. They could make someone else VERY sick. They are especially for the sickness you have, not other people's sickness which might need different medicines.
- Make sure you keep medicines up high away from where children can reach them. If children find your medicines and take them it might make them very sick. If you think a child has taken some of your medicine you should call 000 for an ambulance immediately and have the medicine with you to tell the operator the name. Tell them if you need an interpreter.
- ALWAYS keep taking the tablets for as long as your doctor told you to. Some tablets like antibiotics, you need to take until they are all finished and some medicines you might need to take always like for blood pressure and diabetes. Ask your doctor what to do when your medicine runs out. If this is what the doctor has told you DO NOT stop taking the medicine even if you are feeling better. Talk to your doctor before stopping any medicines they have asked you to take.
- Go back to your doctor and tell them if you don't get better or you start to feel worse - sicker
- Talk to your doctor if you are forgetting to take your medicines or it is difficult to take them - there may be things that can be done about this
- When you are buying the medicine make sure you ask the pharmacist about how to store the medicine. Some medicines need to be in the fridge and other medicine needs to be kept in the cupboard.
- Always tell your doctor what other medicines you have been taking or are taking now, including herbal and traditional medicines and medicines you might have just bought from the pharmacy, to make sure that the medicines do not react with each other and make you sick.
- Sometimes doctors or Specialists in Australia prescribe medicines differently than in your home country. Sometimes you can visit the doctor when you're sick and the doctor does not give you a prescription for medicine. Sometimes the doctor may use injections differently from your home country.

- Many doctors in Australia think that stress or pressure or worries can also cause you to feel sick. Your doctor may want to talk to you about your stress or want you to learn some relaxation exercises rather than give you medicine.
- When the doctors in Australia think that you can stop being sick or stay healthy by having a healthier diet with more fruit and vegetables and less sugar, caffeine or salt or doing some exercise or other activities this may seem strange to you. But the doctors have studied these things and they know that these things can help make you feel better.