

Questions to Ask Your Pharmacist

I'm Lenore Kelley, Chief Pharmacist for CIGNA Home Delivery Pharmacy. Your pharmacist, whether at a home delivery pharmacy or a retail pharmacy, is a wealth of information about medications. However, most people don't know what questions to ask in order to obtain their assistance.



Here are some suggestions for questions you may want to ask your pharmacist, or your doctor, the next time you need to fill a prescription:

First, "Why do I need this medication?"

Sometimes you feel fine and don't understand why your doctor gave you the prescription. For others, the reason may seem pretty basic. But either way, your pharmacist may have valuable insight that can give you more information about your health.

Next: "How important is it to take my medication exactly as prescribed?"

Some medications only work if you take them at certain times of the day or at certain intervals. Some must be taken until they are gone, not just until you feel better.

Third, "Are there other ways to take my medications?"

If your medication is a large pill, you might want to ask your pharmacist if there are other ways the medication can be taken. Some might be available in liquid form, or crushed to make them easier to swallow. But never open capsules or crush pills without your doctor or pharmacist's permission as these actions could change the effectiveness of some medications.

Another question is, "What are the side effects?"

You should always be aware of the side effects your medication may cause. Ask your pharmacist about them so you know what to expect. He or she will also be able to tell you if you can do anything, like take it with food, to avoid those side effects.

One question can end up saving you a lot of money. Ask whether there is a less expensive drug, such as a generic version, that you can take instead. If there is, ask the pharmacist if he or she can call your doctor to have the prescription changed to allow the generic or less expensive alternative to be filled.

Also, your pharmacist or doctor may also be able to share with you other things you can do besides taking medication that will help you be healthier.

You may want to make a list of these questions to ask your doctor or pharmacist so you cover all your bases the next time you have to fill a prescription. And if you think of something you're curious about concerning your medication, just pick up your phone, call your pharmacist and ask.

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