

*Questions
To Ask Your
Doctor
and Pharmacist*

A GUIDE
for **SENIORS**

Acknowledgements

Manitoba Health and the Manitoba Seniors and Healthy Aging Secretariat developed this booklet in consultation with the Manitoba Medical Association and the Manitoba Pharmaceutical Association.

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I INTRODUCTION

You have a right to know about your health and the medication you are taking. Your health professionals have a responsibility to provide you with this information.

Whenever you have questions about your health care, ask for answers. You and your doctor are partners, working together to ensure your good health. That's why you should always take the time to find out what you need to know. It's also why you should give your doctor complete information on your health and any medication (prescription, non-prescription and herbal products) you are taking.

If your doctor feels that a prescription for medication is necessary, visit your pharmacist to have it filled. Your pharmacist is an expert on medication and can supplement the information your doctor has given you.

Take the opportunity to ask questions and get the answers. After all, you can't follow your doctor's or pharmacist's instructions unless you understand them.

I INTRODUCTION

This guide has been developed by the Manitoba Seniors Healthy Aging Secretariat and Manitoba Health to inform older Manitobans about questions to consider asking their doctors and pharmacists.

In the event that you require the assistance of a caregiver, share this booklet with him/her.

II MEDICATIONS

Questions to Ask Your Doctor:

Before you visit your doctor, you may wish to prepare a list of symptoms you are experiencing or questions you want to ask. You may have your own ideas for a list or you may find the list provided at the end of this booklet helpful.

Take your list to the doctor and ask your questions. Write the answers down or ask to have them written down for you. After your visit, you should have answers to the following questions:

- What's the name of the medication?
- Why am I taking the medication? What is it for?
- Are there alternatives other than medication?
- Is there any way I can combine or reduce the number of medications I am taking?
- Is this the lowest possible dose of the medication for the desired results?
- What will happen if I don't take the medication?
- Is it possible for me to begin the medication with a prescription for a smaller quantity, to test for sensitivities or reactions?

II MEDICATIONS

- Are there any side effects or reactions that I should report immediately?
- What are the expected results of taking this medication?
- Do you want to see me while I am taking this medication?
- Am I to return for another visit and, if so, will it be before my prescription can be renewed? Can it be renewed by phone? Do I need the number of refills on the prescription?
- How do I prepare for the tests you recommend? (ex: fasting for a specified time period)
- Am I to phone your office for tests results?
- Do you want me to report back and, if so, when?

II MEDICATIONS

Questions to Ask Your Pharmacist:

- Can this medication be taken in any other form? (ex: trouble swallowing large pills)
- What are the side-effects that may occur with this medication? What side-effects should be reported immediately to my doctor or pharmacist?
- Will my prescription medication have any side-effects if mixed with my non-prescription medication or herbal products? Are there any drug interactions?
- Are any of my non-prescription medications or herbal products harmful to my medical condition?
- What do the symbols and stickers on the medication container mean?
- Does the *Drug Caution Code* apply to my medication? (This code requires patients be informed about side-effects or cautions on medication containers.)
- Do you have containers that are easier to open than the child-proof type? (Most pharmacies carry different kinds of containers and closures.)

II MEDICATIONS

- Is my medication sensitive to light, heat, moisture or cold? How should I store it?
- I am taking several medications at different times during the day. Do you have any ideas or suggestions to help me organize them and help me remember to take them?
- Do you have any written material about my medication?

II MEDICATIONS

Questions to Ask Your Doctor and/or Pharmacist:

- What are the costs, benefits and risks of taking this medication?
- Is there a generic brand for this drug?
- Is this prescription medication an eligible drug under the Pharmacare Program?
- How do I take this medication? (ex: orally)
- How often should I take the medication?
- When should I take the medication? Before, after or between meals? At bedtime? As needed?
- Are there specific foods or beverages I should or should not take with my medication? (ex: with or without milk)
- Are there any non-prescription medications or herbal products I should avoid taking at the same time as this medication? (Be sure to show your doctor and pharmacist a list of all your medications, including any non-prescription medications such as aspirins, vitamins or antacids as well as herbal products.)

II MEDICATIONS

- Is there anything else I should avoid while I'm taking this medication? (ex: driving a car, air travel or exercise)
- Might I experience any side-effects or reactions to this medication? If so, what are they? What should I do if I develop a side-effect or reaction? What side-effects or reactions should be reported immediately to my doctor or pharmacist?
- What should I do if I miss a dose of this medication?
- How long should I take this medication?
- What do I do if I need a refill of the medication?
- Is there any written patient information available about this medication?
- What danger signs should I look for?
- Is there anything else I should know?

II MEDICATIONS

Things to Do

- Before your visit, determine what you would like to know by the end of your visit.
- Make a list of your symptoms, questions, concerns and any past experiences with the same problem(s).
- Take all your medication, including any non-prescription medications and herbal products, or a list of them, with you to the doctor and pharmacist.
- At the doctor's office, ask your most important questions first, take notes. Tell your doctor as much as you can. Ask, if you don't understand, and repeat what you think the doctor said.
- Learn some basic medical terms, keep a journal of what you have learned, your prescribed medications, reactions to medications and treatment and questions as they occur.
- Before starting to use your medication make sure you understand all instructions.
- Take your medication as directed, without taking more or less than the prescribed amount.

II MEDICATIONS

- Use a checklist to keep track of the medication you have taken.
- If you experience any unusual signs or symptoms, or notice anything different, call your doctor or pharmacist immediately. The way drugs are absorbed into your body can change as you age. Watch for reactions such as headaches, lack of co-ordination, changes in moods, eating, sleeping or breathing patterns or any other unusual symptoms.
- Keep a permanent record of all medications that cause you any allergic reactions or sensitivity.
- If your doctor suggests you wear a Medic-Alert bracelet or necklet for allergies, you can order one by calling 1-800-668-1507.
- Even if you are feeling better, do not stop taking your medication without your doctor's approval.
- Never share your medication with others; it could have serious consequences.
- Remove cotton packing from the medication container and keep your medication in the original airtight container.

II MEDICATIONS

- Store your medication in a safe and appropriate place. Ask your pharmacist for advice on where to store your medications. Most medications should be stored at room temperature away from light and excessive moisture, so the bathroom is not always the best place to store medications.
- Check the expiry date of your medication. Do not use any expired medication, as it may be ineffective or even harmful in some cases. If there is no expiry date, consult your pharmacist.
- Take outdated medication to your pharmacist for disposal.
- If you forget to take your medication, do not double the next dose. Call your doctor or pharmacist for instructions on what to do.
- Finish all your medication, unless your doctor tells you not to.

III PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Drug Programs Information Network

The Drug Programs Information Network (DPIN) connects all Manitoba community pharmacies through a province-wide network into a central database for drug use review. This system provides you with better Pharmacare service, more drug safety and increased appropriate Pharmacare usage.

The Drug Programs Information Network is based on your personal health identification number (PHIN). For your prescription safety, this nine-digit number on your purple health card should be given to your pharmacist every time you fill a prescription. If your new prescription should not be mixed with other prescriptions, your pharmacist will be promptly alerted.

If you do not have a card, contact the **Insured Benefits Branch of Manitoba Health at 786-7101 in Winnipeg or toll-free 1-800-392-1207.**

III PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Pharmacare

Pharmacare coverage is based on your family income as well as the amount you pay for eligible prescription drugs. You are required to pay a portion of the cost of your eligible prescription drugs each year. This amount will be your annual Pharmacare deductible, based on your annual total family income.

Once your Pharmacare deductible has been met, the Pharmacare Program will pay 100% of eligible prescription costs until the end of the benefit year. As the Pharmacare Program is connected electronically with all Manitoba retail pharmacies, you are not required to submit your Pharmacare receipts.

You qualify for Pharmacare if you are eligible for Manitoba Health Coverage; your prescriptions are not paid through other provincial or federal programs; your prescription costs are not fully covered by a private drug insurance program.

To apply for the Pharmacare Program, please complete the Pharmacare Application Consent Authorization Form. You may choose one of two application options on this form:

III PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Option A: this one-time application option eliminates the need to submit an annual application form. Pharmacare uses electronic data exchange with Canada Revenue Agency to establish the annual deductible on April 1 of each benefit year. Canada Revenue Agency electronically forwards to Manitoba Health the most recent income information available. You may make application to the program anytime during the benefit year April 1 to March 31.

Option B: this annual application option requires that you submit a Pharmacare Application Consent Authorization Form every benefit year. Application must be made during the benefit year April 1 to March 31. Pharmacare Application Consent Authorization Forms are available at all Manitoba pharmacies, Manitoba Health, 300 Carlton Street, Winnipeg, and at <http://www.gov.mb.ca/health/pharmacare>

For more information, call the Pharmacare recorded information line at 204-788-2506 (English) or 204-788-2520 (French), or contact Manitoba Health Provincial Drug Programs at 786-7141 in Winnipeg, toll free at 1-800-297-8099, TTY (204) 774-8618, or e-mail at pharmacare@gov.mb.ca

III PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Health Care Directives

In Manitoba, *The Health Care Directives Act* protects your right to accept or refuse medical treatment. A health care directive allows you to make choices about your medical future.

A health care directive is a written document which allows you to express your specific instructions about the level and type of medical treatment you want performed. This directive applies if you are ever unable to indicate your wishes because of mental incapacity or inability to communicate. It also allows you to appoint another person, called a proxy, to make health decisions on your behalf if you are unable to do so. It is important that family, friends, your doctor and your proxy know you have a health care directive and where it can be found.

To be valid, a health care directive must be in writing, signed and dated. It will be binding on health care professionals and your proxy, provided the instructions are consistent with accepted medical practices.

III PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

The Manitoba Government has prepared a health care directive form for your convenience. To obtain a copy, call the:

***Seniors Information Line
in Winnipeg 945-6565,
or Toll-free 1-800-665-6565***

The form is also available online at
www.gov.mb.ca/health/livingwill.html

III PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Emergency Response Information Kit (E.R.I.K.)

The goal of E.R.I.K. is to improve the accessibility of vital information in an emergency. It ensures seniors have a standard package of health information placed in a common location and available to paramedics and other health care providers. This program assists seniors with independent living and provides a valuable personal health safety package to seniors. It eases concerns of caregivers and helps emergency response personnel give focused service in an emergency.

E.R.I.K. contains an information brochure, a Health Information Form, a Health Care Directive Information sheet and form, an organ donation card, a donation slip, a slot to insert a business card (contact or sponsor) and a sticker for the front door of a residence. To enquire if an E.R.I.K. is available in your community, call your local community resource council (CRC). For a list of CRCs, please call the ***Seniors Information Line in Winnipeg 945-6565, or Toll-free 1-800-665-6565***

III PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Medication Information Line for the Elderly

The University of Manitoba has designed the Medication Information Line for the Elderly to supplement information offered by your pharmacist and physician. Inquiries about drugs and proper drug use can be made over the phone to a pharmacist consultant, Monday to Thursday, 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

Your inquiry will be answered as soon as possible. If you have any questions or concerns about the medication that you, or someone close to you is taking, contact the Medication Information Line for the Elderly at 474-6493 in Winnipeg.

III PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Seniors Information Line

If you require any other type of information or services, you can contact the Manitoba Seniors and Healthy Aging Secretariat Information Line. This line provides seniors with easy access to government departments, programs and information on issues affecting seniors.

Concerns and questions will be handled promptly when you call:

***in Winnipeg 945-6565,
or Toll-free 1-800-665-6565***

Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

If you call outside of these hours, you can leave your name and telephone number on the voice message and someone will call you back as soon as possible.

The Manitoba Seniors and Healthy Aging Secretariat also has a Seniors Abuse Line. This is a confidential information service giving seniors, family, service providers and the community access to information about elder abuse. Information includes existing resources, support services throughout Manitoba and help accessing those resources.

III PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

An elder abuse consultant is also available to provide education and training, and to assist communities to ensure that services and supports are co-ordinated and available to abused seniors. Call the Seniors Abuse Line at 945-1884 in Winnipeg, or toll-free 1-888-896-7183. You can also check the Manitoba Seniors and Healthy Aging Secretariat Web site at www.gov.mb.ca/sd for more information.

Health Links/Info Santé

Health Links is a telephone health information service throughout Manitoba. It is available 24-hours-a-day, seven days a week. Specially skilled nurses offer health information and support to people who require assistance. They may also help callers decide if they need further help, such as an urgent care centre or an emergency department.

***Call Health Links/Info Santé
in Winnipeg at 788-8200,
or Toll-free 1-888-315-9257.***

IV OTHER

Useful Phone Numbers

Drug Programs Information Network (DPIN)

Manitoba Health - Insured Benefits Branch

Phone: 786-7101 in Winnipeg

Toll-free: 1-800-392-1207

Pharmacare Line

Phone: 204-788-2506 (English) in Winnipeg

204-788-2520 (French) in Winnipeg

Pharmacare Program

Phone: 786-7141 in Winnipeg

Toll-free: 1-800-297-8099

Medication Information Line for the Elderly

Phone: 474-6493 in Winnipeg

Hours of Operation: 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

IV OTHER

Seniors Information Line

Phone: 945-6565 in Winnipeg

Toll-free: 1-800-665-6565

Hours of Operation: 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Health Links/Info Santé

Phone: 788-8200 in Winnipeg

Toll-free: 1-888-315-9257

Info Health Guide to Health Services in Manitoba

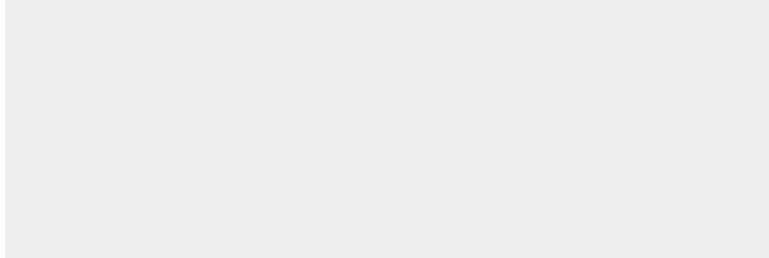
www.gov.mb.ca/healthguide

Phone: 786-7105 in Winnipeg

Toll-free: 1-800-392-1207

Medic-Alert

Toll-free: 1-800-668-1507



LIST OF COMMON QUESTIONS

You may wish to take this list with you on your visit to the doctor or pharmacist.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR DOCTOR:

- What's the name of the medication?
- Why am I taking the medication? What is it for?
- Are there alternatives other than medication?
- Is there any way I can combine or reduce the number of medications I am taking?
- Is this the lowest possible dose of the medication for the desired results?
- What will happen if I don't take the medication?
- Is it possible for me to begin the medication with a prescription for a smaller quantity, to test for sensitivities or reactions?



LIST OF COMMON QUESTIONS

- Are there any side-effects or reactions that I should report immediately?
- What are the expected results of taking this medication?
- Do you want to see me while I am taking this medication?
- Am I to return for another visit and, if so, will it be before my prescription can be renewed? Can it be renewed by phone? Do I need the number of refills indicated on the prescription?
- How do I prepare for the tests you recommend? (ex: fasting for a specified time period)
- Am I to phone your office for tests results?
- Do you want me to report back and, if so, when?



LIST OF COMMON QUESTIONS

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR PHARMACIST:

- Can this medication be taken in any other form?
- What are the side-effects that may occur with this medication? What side-effects should be reported immediately to my doctor or pharmacist?
- Will my prescription medication have any side-effects if mixed with my non-prescription medication or herbal products? Are there any drug interactions?
- Are any of my non-prescription medications or herbal products harmful to my medical condition?
- What do the symbols and stickers on the medication container mean?
- Does the *Drug Caution Code* apply to my medication?



LIST OF COMMON QUESTIONS

- Do you have containers that are easier to open than the child-proof type?
- Is my medication sensitive to light, heat, moisture or cold? How should I store it?
- I am taking several medications at different times during the day. Do you have any ideas or suggestions to help me organize them and help me remember to take them?
- Do you have any written material about my medication?



LIST OF COMMON QUESTIONS

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR DOCTOR AND/OR PHARMACIST:

- What are the costs, benefits and risks of taking this medication?
- Is there a generic brand for this drug?
- Is this prescription medication an eligible drug under the Pharmacare Program?
- How do I take this medication? (ex: orally)
- How often should I take the medication?
- When should I take the medication? Before, after or between meals? At bedtime? As needed?
- Are there specific foods or beverages I should or should not take with my medication? (ex: with or without milk)
- Are there any non-prescription medications or herbal products I should avoid taking at the same time as this medication?



LIST OF COMMON QUESTIONS

- Is there anything else I should avoid while I'm taking this medication? (ex: driving a car, air travel, exercise)
- Might I experience any side-effects or reactions to this medication? If so, what are they? What should I do if I develop a side-effect or reaction? What side-effects or reactions should be reported immediately to my doctor or pharmacist?
- What should I do if I miss a dose of this medication?
- How long should I take this medication?
- What do I do if I need a refill of the medication?
- Is there any written patient information available about this medication?
- What danger signs should I look for?
- Is there anything else I should know?



