

# Medication Terms to Know



Medication management can be a complex task. Make sure that you understand all the words your health-care provider may use when discussing medications. Here are some common terms to know:

<b>Side effects</b>	Symptoms or feelings you get when you take a medication that are beyond the drug's intended effects. Side effects are usually bothersome (for example, dizziness, nausea, confusion) and can be either mild or serious. You should report any side effects to your health-care professional.
<b>Generics</b>	Copies of brand-name medications that have the same purpose, strength, safety, and other characteristics of brand-name medications, but are manufactured by a different company. Generics are required by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to meet the same quality standards as brand-name medications and generally cost significantly less money.
<b>Drug interactions</b>	<p>When a medication interacts with another medication (or drug), condition, food, or alcohol and changes the way the medication acts in the body. There are four different types of these interactions you should know:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Drug-drug interactions:</b> when taking one medication alters the effect of another medication a person is taking. Drug-drug interactions can increase or decrease the effectiveness of a medication, or cause harmful unintended side effects.</li><li>• <b>Drug-condition interactions:</b> when a medical condition you already have affects how your body responds to certain medications.</li><li>• <b>Drug-food interactions:</b> when a medication reacts with foods or drinks you have consumed. Foods can affect the way medication is absorbed, and medication can affect the way the body absorbs nutrients from foods.</li><li>• <b>Drug-alcohol interactions:</b> when a medication reacts with an alcoholic drink you have consumed. Drug-alcohol interactions can increase or decrease the effectiveness of a medication, cause harmful side effects or increased intoxication.</li></ul>
<b>Formulary</b>	Typically, a list of prescription medications that your insurance plan will pay for. Formulary can also refer to a list of medications in other contexts; for example, a hospital's formulary is a list of medications the hospital pharmacy stocks.
<b>Non-medical use of prescription drugs</b>	The misuse or abuse of prescription medications for purposes other than medical treatment—for example, to get high. This type of drug abuse is increasing in the United States. Use your prescription medications only as prescribed and keep them out of the hands of friends and family members (especially teenagers and young adults).
<b>Medication adherence</b>	Faithfully sticking to the medical treatment regime your doctor prescribes, even without that doctor's close supervision.
<b>Over use</b>	Taking more medication than is prescribed or recommended by your health-care professional or prescription label. This often happens by accident. For example, maybe you forgot you took your medication in the morning, so you take it again.
<b>Under use</b>	Taking less medication than prescribed or recommended, or missing or skipping doses. This can also include tablet/pill splitting when you have not been instructed to split the tablet. Always check with your health-care professional first.
<b>Polypharmacy</b>	When a person takes multiple prescription and/or over-the-counter (OTC) medications. Polypharmacy is common among older adults and can lead to problems such as harmful drug interactions, medication confusion and high costs. Not all polypharmacy is bad. Sometimes it may be necessary.
<b>Over-the-counter</b>	Medications that do not require a prescription and that can be purchased at the register of any pharmacy or health store.

Adapted from National Council on Patient Information and Education (NCPPIE) 2011- Medication Use Safety Training for Seniors.