



#55 in a series of Health Bulletins on issues of pressing interest to all New Yorkers

# Taking Your Medicine

How to make it easier when your health – and your life – depend on it.

TOO MANY PILLS!  
I CAN'T KEEP TRACK!

OH, NO,  
I RAN OUT AGAIN!



- Available in Spanish, Chinese and Russian: call 311 or visit [nyc.gov/health](http://nyc.gov/health)
- Disponible en español: llame al 311 o visite [nyc.gov/health](http://nyc.gov/health)
- 需要中文服務 - 可電 311 或造訪網址: [nyc.gov/health](http://nyc.gov/health)

## Taking Medicine as Prescribed Can Be Hard!

- Do you have high blood pressure? High cholesterol? Diabetes?
- Has your doctor prescribed a medicine that you must take every day?
- Do you always take your medicine correctly? If not, you are not alone! Many people skip doses or make medication mistakes.



## How to Make It Easier

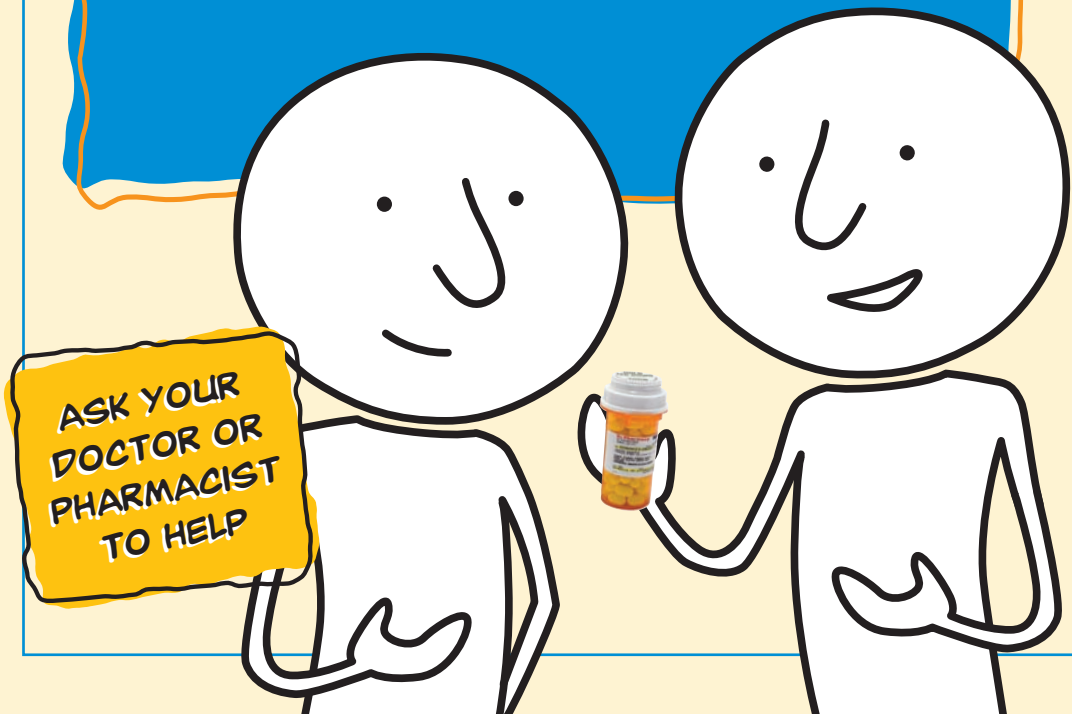
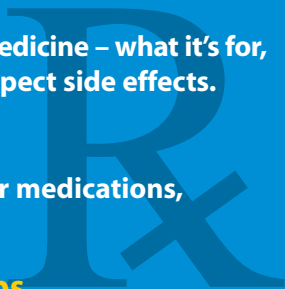
### 1. Have a regular doctor and a regular pharmacist.

- The better you know them, the easier it is to talk.
- Don't be afraid to bother them! Ask your doctor or pharmacist to help. It's their job.
- Don't say you're taking your medicine if you're not.
- Tell your doctor about every medicine you take, including over-the-counter drugs, vitamins and herbal remedies.
- Talk about alcohol and drug use.
- Learn as much as you can about each medicine – what it's for, how often to take it, and whether to expect side effects.

### 2. Reward yourself.

Every week that you remember all your medications, give yourself a treat.

### 3. Check out the chart for helpful tips.



# KEEPING UP WITH DAILY MEDICATIONS

## PROBLEM

## WHAT TO DO

**1. I don't think I need it.**  
I feel just fine.

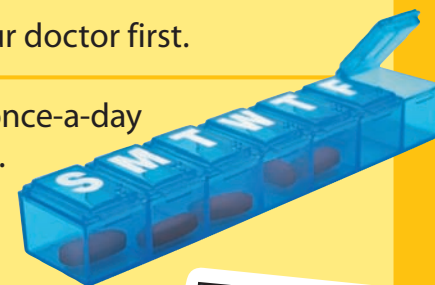
- Many conditions, such as high blood pressure and high cholesterol, damage your body even when you don't have symptoms.
- Don't stop taking your medicine unless you talk to your doctor first.

**2. Too complicated!**

Too many pills!  
Too many schedules!  
I can't keep track of them all!



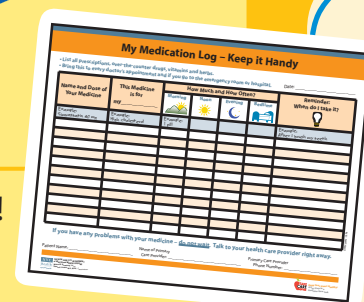
- Ask your doctor if any of your pills can be changed to once-a-day or long-acting forms (so you take fewer pills each day).
- Use a daily or weekly pillbox to organize medications.
- Put all your medicine bottles in a bag and bring them to your doctor to see if any are no longer needed.
- Call 311 or ask your doctor or pharmacist for a "Medication Log" that lists all of your medicines and when to take them.



**3. I can't afford it.**

This costs too much.  
I'll just take less.

- No one should ever have to go without medicine to save money!
- Ask your doctor if your medication comes in a lower-cost generic form, or if you qualify for free medication. Many people do. **(See More Information.)**



Call 311 for a free Medication Log.

**4. I just can't remember.**

I forget to order refills.  
Or I run out when I'm traveling.

- Don't run out! Ask your health plan if you can get up to 3 months worth of medicine at once.
- Many pharmacies or health plans have reminder programs, or will deliver or mail refills. Ask them.

**5. This medicine isn't working.**

I think it's making me sick. I feel worse now than I did before.

- Tell your doctor right away. If medication is causing side effects, you can switch to a different one.
- But don't stop taking it unless your doctor or pharmacist tells you to.

**6. I don't understand the labels.**

I can't read them,  
so I can't follow the instructions.



- Many pharmacies can print labels in different languages, in larger print, or put pictures on the container.
- Call 311 or ask your doctor or pharmacist for a "Medication Log" that lists all your medicines and when to take them.

**7. I'm embarrassed.**

I don't want people to know I'm taking medicine.

- Find a private space at work or home to take your medicine.
- Keep medications someplace only *you* have access to. (Just don't forget where you put them!).



# Simple Ways to Help Your Medicine Work Better

## Taking blood pressure medicine?

### • Get your pressure down faster.

- Cut the salt! Eat a healthy diet rich in fiber and low in saturated fat. Eat fruits and vegetables every day.
- Get at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity (such as a brisk walk) at least 5 days a week.

### • Check your own pressure.

- Many pharmacies have machines you can use for free.
- Home blood pressure monitors are easy to use. You can buy them at most pharmacies and department stores.
- Call 311 for a free blood pressure tracking card. Take the card with you every time you see your doctor.

## Taking medicine to lower your cholesterol?

- Ask your doctor what your goal should be.
- Help your medicine work faster. Choose foods with 0 grams trans fat. Eat a diet low in saturated fat and cholesterol.

## Do you have diabetes?

- Keep track of your A1C. For most people, the goal is less than 7%.
- Keep your blood pressure under control. Goal: less than 130/80.
- Know your LDL (“bad”) cholesterol and keep it low. Goal: less than 100 mg/dL.

## More Information and Help

### • American Heart Association:

[www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=165](http://www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=165)  
call 1-800-AHA-USA-1 (1-800-242-8721)

### • Food and Drug Administration (FDA):

[www.fda.gov/fdac/reprints/medtips.html](http://www.fda.gov/fdac/reprints/medtips.html)

### • Project Inform (focus on HIV medications):

[www.projectinform.org/info/adherence/adherence.pdf](http://www.projectinform.org/info/adherence/adherence.pdf)

### • Help to pay for medications:

Salud a Su Alcance Pharmacy Assistance Program (SASA-PAP)  
[www.nyp.org/services/pharmacy-assistance-program.html](http://www.nyp.org/services/pharmacy-assistance-program.html) or call (212) 342-1617

### • Help for reducing medication costs:

- NYC Rx: a non-profit organization that makes safe and effective medication available at the lowest possible cost to New Yorkers. [www.nycrx.org](http://www.nycrx.org) or call 1-866-MY-NYCRX (1-866-696-9272)
- Healthy New York: [www.ins.state.ny.us/website2/hny/english/hny.htm](http://www.ins.state.ny.us/website2/hny/english/hny.htm) or [www.ins.state.ny.us/website2/hny/spanish/hnys.htm](http://www.ins.state.ny.us/website2/hny/spanish/hnys.htm)
- RxOutreach: [www.rxoutreach.com](http://www.rxoutreach.com) or call 1-800-769-3880
- Elderly Pharmaceutical Insurance Coverage (EPIC) (for people 65 and older): [www.health.state.ny.us/nysdoh/epic/faq.htm](http://www.health.state.ny.us/nysdoh/epic/faq.htm)
- Bridges to Access: [www.bridgestoaccess.com](http://www.bridgestoaccess.com)

**DIAL  
311**

## For copies of any Health Bulletin

All Health Bulletins are also available at [nyc.gov/health](http://nyc.gov/health)

Visit [nyc.gov/health/e-mail](http://nyc.gov/health/e-mail) for a free e-mail subscription



# Health Bulletin

NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE

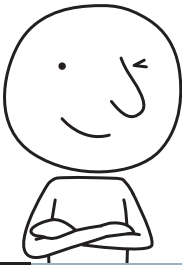
VOLUME 6, NUMBER 9

#55 in a series of Health Bulletins on issues of pressing interest to all New Yorkers

**New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene**

*Prepared in cooperation with:*

Division of Health Promotion and Disease Prevention,  
Bureau of Chronic Disease Prevention and Control  
Cardiovascular Disease Prevention and Control Program



## **Taking Your Medicine** **How to make it easier**

**DIAL  
311**

For Non-Emergency New York City Services  
Telephone Interpretation in More Than 170 Languages