Taking Medications for Your Heart

If you have questions about
your medication, ask your
doctor or pharmacist.

Medication can be a key tool in managing heart disease. You may need several types. Some medications can help prevent the blood clots that cause heart attacks. Others can help control cholesterol, diabetes, and high blood pressure.

Know Your Medications

Medications are prescribed in just the right doses for your heart condition. They work only if you take them exactly as directed. Take heart medications at the same time every day. This will keep the amount of medication in your bloodstream at a steady level.

Set Up a Routine

Some medications are best taken on an empty stomach. Others are taken with meals. A medication organizer can help you take your pills at the right time each day. You can set your watch to beep when it's time to take a pill. Or post a note on the fridge or bathroom mirror.

Beware of Drug Interactions

Vitamins, herbal supplements, and some over-the-counter drugs can be dangerous to take with your heart medications. Tell your doctor about all products you're taking, even simple remedies for headaches, allergies, colds, or constipation.

Cope with Side Effects

Some medications have side effects, such as nausea or headaches. If you have side effects, your doctor may reduce or change your medication. Never stop taking a medication or lower your dose on your own. This may cause sudden heart problems.

Safety Tips

- Fill all your prescriptions at the same drugstore. This keeps your records in one place.

- Ask your pharmacist or doctor for a "fact sheet" or other patient information when you start any new medication.

- Tell your doctor and pharmacist if you have allergies to any medication. Also, mention if you are pregnant or breastfeeding.

- Order refills a few weeks before you run out.

- Take plenty of pills when you travel.

- Store medications in a cool, dry, dark place.

- Never share medications with someone else.

- Give a copy of your medication list to your spouse or a close friend.