Have a chronic condition? Use your medications wisely

If, like millions of people, you are being treated for diabetes, high cholesterol, asthma, depression or another ongoing condition, it's vital to keep on top of your medications—especially if you take more than one. If you're getting a new prescription, be sure to let your doctor know of all other drugs you take, including over-the-counter medications and supplements. Here are good rules to follow:

**Clarify instructions with your doctor.** For example, confusing wording on the pill bottle such as “take two tablets twice daily” may mean “take two tablets in the morning and two tablets at night.”

**Know the potential side effects.** And what to do if you have a reaction or miss a dose.

**Don’t stop a medication without talking to your doctor.** Even if you feel great!

**Use a “days-of-the-week” pill box.** Fill it at the beginning of each week and make a mark on a calendar each time you take a dose. Consider using special pill boxes with built-in timers.

**Don’t decrease a drug’s dosage to save money.** Always take the full amount to get the full benefits. Asking your doctor if there’s a generic equivalent for your brand name medication can save you money!

**Fill your prescriptions on time.** Don’t wait until you’re completely out of medication.

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**Strive for 5 fruits and veggies every day**

Fruits and vegetables are the foundation of a healthy diet—they provide you with essential vitamins, minerals and fiber. In fact, they should make up half your plate at each meal. However, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), only one in 10 adults eat enough fruits or vegetables. Ensuring you’re eating enough fruits and vegetables can help reduce the risk of chronic diseases such as heart disease and type 2 diabetes as well as obesity. Try these tips to help add more fruit and veggie servings to your day!

- **Plan ahead** – Make sure you have 5 servings readily available for the day. It can help to write down which fruits and veggies you’re planning on eating at which meals.

- **Swap your pasta for a veggie** – Spaghetti squash tastes delicious with pasta sauce. You can also use eggplant in lieu of lasagna noodles!

- **Keep fruits and vegetables accessible** – Always make sure they’re close at hand for an easy snack!

- **Drink a smoothie** – They can be a great way to get more servings of fruits and vegetables.

- **Don’t have the time to cook a fresh vegetable as a side to dinner? Opt for frozen.** They can be just as good for you as fresh options.

- **Eat fruit for dessert** – If you’re a dessert-after-dinner person, rather than indulging in your usual favorite like cake or ice cream, swap it for a fruit.
Important self-care tips for caregivers

Caring for a friend or family member who needs long-term help can be rewarding, but also overwhelming, with the stress taking a toll on your emotions and body. Taking care of yourself is crucial to stay healthy and balanced, enabling you to provide the care your loved one needs. Keep these tips in mind:

**Build a support team to turn to in times of stress.** Include your loved one’s doctor, family members, friends, church or community organizations. Connect with other caregivers through online support groups. Ask for hands-on help, too—could your sibling share in providing meals, for example?

**Don't skip meals. Get exercise. Take deep breaths!** Keep healthy snacks handy to refuel. Take a 10-minute walk and do simple stretches to clear your mind and release tension. Remember to breathe, meditate or play relaxing music. If caregiving interferes with a good night's sleep, take a 15-minute daytime nap.

**Visit your doctor if you’re starting to feel under the weather.** And keep up with annual check-ups and screenings!

**Treat yourself!** Recharge with a massage or dinner out, for example.