

## 10 TERMS YOU MUST KNOW: Side Effects, Interactions, Adherence and More

- 1. Side effects:** symptoms or feelings you get when you take a drug that are beyond the drug's intended effects. Side effects are usually bothersome (for example, dizziness, nausea, confusion) and can be mild or serious. You should report any side effects to your healthcare professional.
- 2. Generics:** copies of brand-name drugs that have the same purpose, strength, safety, and other characteristics of brand-name drugs, but are manufactured by a different company. Generics are required by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to meet the same quality standards as brand-name drugs and generally cost significantly less money.
- 3. Drug interactions:** when a drug interacts with another drug, condition, food, or alcohol and changes the way the drug acts in the body.
  - **Drug-drug interactions:** when taking one drug alters the effect of another medication a person is taking. Drug-drug interactions can increase or decrease the effectiveness of a drug, or cause harmful unintended side effects.
  - **Drug-condition interactions:** when a medical condition you already have affects how your body responds to certain medications.
  - **Drug-food interactions:** when a drug reacts with foods or drinks you have consumed. Foods can affect the way a drug is absorbed, and drugs can affect the way the body absorbs nutrients from foods.
  - **Drug-alcohol interactions:** when a medicine reacts with an alcoholic drink you have consumed. Drug-alcohol interactions can increase or decrease the effectiveness of a drug, or cause harmful side effects or increased intoxication.
- 4.** To view the Beers criteria [click here](#): a list of medications that are generally considered inappropriate or unsafe for people over age 65.
- 5. Formulary:** typically, a list of prescription drugs that your drug insurance plan will pay for. Formulary can also refer to a list of drugs in other contexts; for example, a hospital's formulary is a list of drugs the hospital pharmacy stocks.
- 6. Non-medical use of prescription drugs:** 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).
- 7. Medication adherence:** faithfully sticking to the medical treatment regime your doctor prescribes, even without that doctor's close supervision.

8. **Over use:** taking more medication than is prescribed or recommended by the healthcare professional or label. This often happens by accident. For example, maybe you forgot you took it in the morning, so you take it again.
9. **Under use:** taking less medication than prescribed or recommended, or missing or skipping doses. (This can also include tablet/pill splitting. Always check with your healthcare professional first!)
10. **Polypharmacy:** when a person takes multiple prescription and/or over-the-counter (OTC) medicines. Polypharmacy is common among older adults and can lead to problems such as harmful drug interactions, medication confusion and high costs.