



DARK SIDE OF MEDICINE



MEDICINE SAFETY SERIES

MS-11

Understanding Medicine Doses

A guide to understanding medicine doses and why dose awareness is an important part of medicine safety.

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Why Do Doses Matter?

The dose of a medicine can be just as important as the medicine itself. Healthcare professionals consider age, weight, health conditions, other medicines, treatment goals and previous response to treatment when choosing a dose.

What Is a Dose?

A dose is the amount of medicine taken at a particular time. The same medicine may be prescribed at different doses for different people.

Why Might a Dose Change?

- Symptoms are not adequately controlled
- Side effects are occurring
- Health conditions have changed
- Monitoring results suggest a change is needed
- Another medicine has been started or stopped
- Treatment goals have changed



Questions You May Wish to Ask

- What dose am I taking?
- Why was this dose chosen?
- Has my dose changed over time?
- What monitoring is required?
- How will we know if the dose is working?
- When will the dose be reviewed?

Dose Awareness and Medicine Safety

- Recognise dose changes
- Prepare for medicine reviews
- Discuss side effects
- Understand monitoring requirements
- Participate in treatment decisions
- Keep accurate medicine records

Understanding Maximum Doses

Some medicines have recognised maximum recommended doses. Questions you may wish to ask include: What is the usual dose range? What is the maximum recommended dose? Why was my current dose chosen?



When Should I Seek Advice?

- You are unsure about your dose
- You believe your dose has changed unexpectedly
- You experience new side effects
- You have concerns about interactions
- You have difficulty taking your medicine as prescribed

Shared Decision-Making

Understanding medicines, doses, benefits, risks and monitoring requirements can help support informed conversations and treatment decisions.

Medicine Safety Tip

Knowing the name of your medicine is important. Knowing the dose, why it was chosen and when it will be reviewed can be equally important.

Related Resources

MS-01 7-Day Medicine Monitoring Diary
MS-03 Questions for Your Doctor, Pharmacist or Healthcare Professional
MS-04 Medicine Review Preparation Pack
MS-10 Understanding the Prescribing Cascade