

Medication

Medication can be a vital part of treatment for many people with mental health problems. If taken regularly medication can work well, often in conjunction with other therapies, to help people live the kinds of lives that they want to lead. Unfortunately many medicines for mental health problems have side effects that can affect people's lives and so it is important that people are fully informed and educated about their medication so that they can manage their own medicines and find the ones that are best for them.

The questions below may help to make sure that you are fully informed about your medicine. They may not all be relevant to you; some of them will depend upon your diagnosis and the reasons why you may need to take medication.

Questions to ask

- Why have you recommended/prescribed this medication?
- Are there any other alternative medicines? What are the differences?
- Are there any other treatments, apart from medication?
- How does the medication work?
- How long will it be before I feel better or it has any effect?
- What are the common and rare side effects?
- What are the short term and long term side effects?
- How long do you recommend that I take this medicine?
- What dose do I need to take? Am I allowed to adjust the dose of this medicine myself according to how I feel?
- What should I do if I forget a dose?
- How easy is this medicine to come off if/when the time comes?
- Does it need any special monitoring e.g. blood tests?
- Are there any other considerations? Other considerations may include:
 - Can I drink alcohol?
 - Does it cause weight gain?
 - Will it affect my sex life?
 - Can I drive?
 - Does it interact with any other medicines or food?
 - What if I want to become pregnant?

- Have you got an information leaflet that you can give me about my choices or a particular medicine?

Please tell the prescriber if you are taking medication for any other reasons. It is useful if you can take a full list of your medicines to your appointments, whether you have bought them yourself e.g. from a supermarket, chemist or they have been prescribed by your GP. It is also important to include any herbal medicines.

If you do experience any side effects or do not want to take the medication as prescribed, you are encouraged to discuss this with a health professional as there may be alternatives or ways of reducing the impact of the side effects. Also some medicines should not be stopped suddenly so it is important that you seek advice if you decide to stop taking them.

To find out further information about specific medicines or the ranges of medicines available to treat particular mental health problems, please click on the link below to access the medication information leaflets on the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust website.

<http://www.cambsmh.nhs.uk/default.asp?id=554>

On this website, there is also general information about taking medication whilst pregnant or driving and links to and leaflets about reliable medication information websites.

If you wish to speak to someone about your medication you can speak to your GP, psychiatrist, pharmacist or care co-ordinator (if you have one).

Alternatively you can contact the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust Medicines Helpline on 01223 218518. (Mon – Fri 9am – 5pm).

This helpline is run by Pharmacy Services for anybody who is taking medication for mental health problems in the county. The specialist mental health pharmacists that answer your call will give you independent advice about your medication. For your information, they may have to call you back at busy times or they may pass your call onto other specialist mental health pharmacists based nearer to where you live in the county.