

6 Questions You Should Ask Your Pharmacist

Filling prescriptions is just one of the services the drugstore offers.

By [Dr. Sanjay Gupta](#)

Come Prepared

Whether you're seeing the Pharmacist about a new prescription or a refill, prepare your questions in advance. Here are some suggestions:

1. **Is there a generic version of the prescribed drug?** A pharmacist can advise you if there is a generic option that is **less expensive than a brand-name drug** "The key difference between generic and brand-name drugs is cost," Pham says. "Generic medications have the same active ingredient as the brand name." Not all generics are alike, however. As Pham points out, "some of the 'fillers' [inactive ingredients] may be different, and patients may prefer one brand over the other based on those." In some cases, a generic substitute may not be available.
2. **Are there major side effects or special instructions?** Your doctor likely won't go over every side effect when giving you a prescription, and the printed information about contraindications and side effects that comes with medication can be overwhelming. "They'll list all these side effects, but there's nothing that says how relevant they are to a particular patient and the other illnesses they have or medications they're taking," Dr. Fields says. Pham suggests asking the pharmacist specifically if there are any special instructions when taking medication, such as "take with or without food [or] stay out of the sun..."
3. **What if I miss a dose?** Accidentally missing a dose of medication is not unusual, and it's not always cause for concern. But it's important to know how you should handle the situation, should it happen.
4. **How should I store my medication?** Most medications should be kept in a dry area at room temperature, while others require refrigeration. Talk to the pharmacist about **how to store drugs** as well as how to properly dispose of unused medications.
5. **Ask for a medication review.** If you're taking several drugs, Tice suggests asking the pharmacist to help you draw up a schedule to maximize their effectiveness and avoid interactions.
6. **Should I see a doctor?** Even if you're not having a prescription filled, you may want to consult the pharmacist about a condition you're treating with over-the-counter medications. "[The pharmacist] can ask specific questions like where is the condition, what does it feel like, how long has this been happening, and what medications have you tried," Pham says. "Pharmacists are a good resource to ask about common sense medical care."

Working with your primary doctor and other healthcare specialists, the pharmacist can play a central role in "a system of care where [providers] have mutual and distinct responsibilities" in your treatment.

Article by Dr. Sanjay Gupta, CNN contributor