

# 10 MEDICATION TIPS

Mitch Horowitz, Registered Pharmacist

**Questions for the doctor.** Be prepared when the doctor prescribes a new medication. Ask questions when you are in the doctor's office.

**WHY** are you prescribing this medication for me?

**WHAT** should I expect this medication to do for me?

- Control/resolve vasculitis symptoms? (Treat active disease? Maintain remission? Treat a flare?)
- Control/resolve side effects? (Sleep issues, GI issues, high/low blood pressure, peripheral neuropathy, etc.)
- How can I tell if what I am feeling is a side effect of the medication or a symptom of the Vasculitis?

**WHAT'S NEXT?**

- How long will I have to take this medication?
- How long will it take for the medication to start working?
- How long do we wait to determine if the medication is not working? What then?
- Who do I contact if I think I am having a problem - filling the medication, getting insurance approval, having a side effect?

**WHEN** should I take this medication?

- Morning/afternoon/evening
- With food? On an empty stomach?
- With other meds? By itself?
- Are there any food, drink, or drug interactions I should consider, most commonly with statins, citrus, or foods with high calcium content (dairy products)?

**HOW** is this medication given? Ask about other options.

- Pill – can you swallow big pills? Can it be split?
- Injection – needle phobia? Will someone teach me how to inject myself?
- Infusion – outpatient infusion centers or hospital?

Ask about the **TIMING** of medications and vaccines such as flu, pneumonia, shingles, and COVID-19.

**Medication COST**

- Ask how much the medication costs, if insurance covers the medication, if it requires pre-approval, is there a generic available? The doctor may not know the answers but can direct you to someone in their office who can help. You may need to call your insurance company directly to ask questions.
- If you are in the hospital all medications will be dispensed by the hospital pharmacy.
- Pharmaceutical companies may have patient-assistance programs although it can take time to process an application and eligibility differs based on each company.

**KEEP A LIST** of your medications, doses, and schedules so you can track how long you have been on a medication.

**KEEP TRACK** of anything unusual that happens. These could be side effects.

- What did you notice and when did it start?
- How often is it happening?
- Is it better or worse at a particular time of the day?
- Take pictures of any visible signs (rashes, swelling, etc.)
- Contact the doctor's office if necessary and be prepared to provide a clear description of what you have observed.

**Always contact your doctor right away if:**

- You think you are having side effects
- You are unable to take your medication for ANY REASON (side effects, cost, insurance issues, prescription approval, medication shortage, etc.)
- Your vasculitis symptoms are not getting better or are getting worse

**What your pharmacist wants you to know.** Ask questions when you pick up your medicines. Pharmacists are happy to answer your questions. If possible, work with one pharmacy. All pharmacies have drug interaction software to ensure that patients aren't prescribed two medicines that might interact with each other.