

Tips on Medications

Medications can treat a disease or lessen the symptoms of a disease, but they also have potential side effects. Improper use of medications can lead to serious damage to one's health.

Tips on using medications:

1. Careful reading of the drug labels include looking at the dosage, frequency, effect, precaution and side effect of the medication being taken.
2. Patients should regularly take the medications being prescribed to them by their doctors. There should not be any self-alteration of the dosage or frequency of the medication. Taking more can lead to drug poisoning, and not having enough can cause an incomplete treatment of the illness.
3. One should not take multiple medications at the same time (including Traditional Chinese Medicine and oral contraceptive pills), without consulting the doctor, as various medications can interfere with each other in their drug effects.
4. After taking the medication, one should follow up with a doctor, rather than self-prescribing at the local chemist, as the illness might have changed, and a review of the medication would be more effective after a doctor's consultation.
5. One should not offer the medications being prescribed to him/her to another patient. Although symptoms might be similar, the other person might not have the same illness. Furthermore, different people would require different medications.
6. Pregnant and Breast feeding mothers should not take medications unless after consultation with a doctor.

Misunderstandings with Antibiotics:

1. Antibiotics are used to treat bacterial infections. Anti-inflammatory medications are a group of medication to decrease inflammation and pain.
2. Antibiotics can treat infections caused by bacteria, but not infections caused by virus (such as common colds/influenza). And in most common cold, the nasal discharge can also change colour or become mucoid. However, as common colds are caused by viruses, taking antibiotics would not be of help.
3. Most antibiotics should be taken before meals, for better absorption.
4. Antibiotics should be taken for the whole course, according to the doctor's advice. Even if the symptoms have improved, one should not stop the antibiotics. Otherwise, the bacteria might not be fully killed within the body, and can also cause bacterial resistance in the future.
5. Some patients can have allergic reaction with taking antibiotics. If these occur, one should stop taking the medication and seek medical advice.

Topical Steroid:

1. Topical steroid can decrease inflammation and itch, and hence, is suitable for treating many skin diseases (such as Eczema, Allergic dermatitis). However, topical steroid cannot kill bacteria, and would even assist bacterial growth. Therefore, topical steroid should not be used in infective skin diseases (such as fungal infection or boils).
2. Long term use of topical steroid can cause many side effects, such as thinning and atrophic changes of the skin, and also causing dilatation of small blood vessels under the skin.
3. Topical steroid should not be used continuously for more than 7 days. When being used, it should be applied thinly over clean skin area. One should not apply too much to prevent excessive absorption and therefore causing side effects.
4. If used according to doctor's advice, and with correct ways of application, topical steroid is in fact not a dangerous medication, but rather is a very effective medication for many skin diseases.

"This article is provided by U Care Hong Kong Medical Limited. The use of this article for other purpose or in other form is subject to prior written permission of U Care Hong Kong Medical Limited."

Source: U Care Hong Kong Medical Limited

