



# How Long Will I Need to Take Medication?

Many things can change how long you will need to take medicine. This resource provides information about some of the things your doctor will think about when deciding how long you will need to take medicine.

## WHAT IS MEDICINE TREATING?

Your doctor will think about what your symptoms are, how severe they are, and how long the symptoms have been bothering you, in deciding which medications to choose and how long you may need to take them. Generally, more mild symptoms that have only been difficult for a brief amount of time will require a shorter time to respond to the medication. The length of time you may need the medication will also likely be briefer. If the symptoms are more difficult, and/or have been present for many months or years, it will often take longer for them to clear completely. In this case, the doctor will usually want you to take the medication for at least several months, and possibly a number of years, once the symptoms have gone away for the best chance to have them not return.

## HOW WELL IS THE MEDICINE WORKING?

If the medicine is definitely improving the symptoms, the doctor may suggest the person keep taking it. If the medicine does not seem to be helping, the doctor may talk about increasing the dose, stopping the medication or trying a different medicine.



## ARE THERE ANY SIDE EFFECTS?

There is a chance for all medicine to have side effects. Side effects are the other effects medications sometimes cause in addition to the intended actions. Not everybody will have side effects. Sometimes these side effects go away after a few days while others last the whole time a person is taking the medicine. If you do not have any side effects or the side effects are small compared to how well the medication is working, the doctor may ask you to keep taking the medicine. If the side effects are a big problem, however, the doctor may suggest using less of the medicine, stopping it, or trying a different medicine.

## ARE THERE OTHER TREATMENTS?

When a professional helps someone with his or her problems, we call it treatment. There are many different treatments to help people manage their symptoms, including medication, talk and behavioral therapy, group therapy, anger management, and others. These treatments can be very important in helping someone to feel better. If another treatment, such as therapy, is working well, your doctor may suggest using less medicine or stopping it. You should talk to your doctor if you want to try other treatments or change your medicine.

## CAN I STOP THE MEDICATION ON MY OWN?

You may decide you no longer want to be on medication, because either you are feeling better or perhaps it is not working the way you hoped. While it may be tempting simply to stop the medication, it is very important to discuss this with your doctor. Many medications have severe side effects when stopped suddenly. Even if your doctor disagrees with you coming off the medication, he or she will still help you to stop it safely if that is your desire.



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