

# Information on General Medication Use

You need to know, and are entitled to be informed on, what medications are being prescribed for you or your child. Understanding the medications will help with safety and also help you to manage the condition better.

This leaflet provides some general information on the use of medications; for more details about the specific medication, please consult your healthcare professional or read the specific medication leaflet online at <https://www.singhealth.com.sg/patient-care/medicine>.

Before any medication is prescribed, inform your healthcare professional if you or your child have any allergies or intolerance to any medication. It is also important to inform your healthcare professional of any medications you or your child are currently taking, including over-the counter medications, vitamins and herbal supplements.

Remember to never share your medication with others, even if their condition appears to be the same, as this could be dangerous because every person is different.

## How and when should I take the medication?

- Follow the dose and timing shown on the medicine label.
- Try to have the medicines at around the same time(s) each day so that this becomes part of your daily routine, which will help you to remember.
- Some medication should be taken with food. Others work best on an empty stomach. Follow the instructions on the label, or according to your healthcare professional's instructions.
- Certain medications should not be taken with certain foods, juices or milk as it may reduce the effectiveness of your medications. Your healthcare professional will inform you what items to avoid.

## Are there any possible side effects?

- All medications are expected to have some side effects. However, most of these side effects are tolerable.
- Your healthcare professional will inform you about the serious side effects to look out for. Specific medication instruction leaflets are also available at <https://www.singhealth.com.sg/patient-care/medicine>
- **If you notice any serious side effects or allergic reactions (e.g. swollen face/ eyes/ lips/ tongue, difficulty breathing or itchy skin rashes over the whole body), please seek medical attention immediately.**

## How should I store my medication?

- You should follow the instructions on the label on how to store medications e.g. store in the fridge or at room temperature.
- All medications should be kept out of reach of children.

## **Medication use in Children and during Pregnancy/Breastfeeding**

It is important to discuss with your healthcare professional before giving any medicines to your child or when using medications in pregnancy/ breastfeeding. Your healthcare professional will determine which medication is safe for you or your child.

However, sometimes medication use in children and during pregnancy/ breastfeeding may not be specified in its licensed indications and may be used “off-label”. The following provides some useful information regarding “off-label” use of medications.

### **What is “off-label” use?**

“Off-label” use refers to the use of a medicine that is not within the stated product license or in accordance with the product instruction leaflet. Some examples include:

1. Use for a different disease to that stated in the licence
2. Use in a different population outside of the licensed range (e.g. children, pregnant women)
3. Use of a different dose than that stated in the license
4. Use of a medicine that is only available from overseas and has to be imported
5. Use of a medicine that has to be specially made because it cannot be obtained easily (e.g. liquid medications prepared by pharmacy)

### **Why can “off-label” medications be used to treat conditions not stated in their license?**

Many medications that are widely used are not used within their stated product license and are used “off-label”. This is especially common in the case of children and during pregnancy/ breastfeeding. This is because in order to get a license to promote a medication’s use in children or for the pregnant/ breastfeeding population, the drug company needs to conduct clinical trials involving these groups, and this may not be feasible. The licensing process and clinical trials can be long and costly, hence some drug companies may decide not to conduct more trials once the drug is available on the market.

### **Are “off-label” medications safe?**

“Off-label” medications are only prescribed after careful consideration of other options (if any) available. Your doctors will have read information from medical publications supporting the use of the medications, and may have consulted other expert advice. An “off-label” medication will only be used if it is deemed the most appropriate medication for you or your child’s condition. At times, the instruction leaflet that comes with the medicine may mention that the medicine is not suitable for use in children and during pregnancy/breastfeeding. This does not mean that it cannot be safely prescribed by a doctor for such use after careful consideration by the doctor.

### **Where can I get more information regarding “off-label” use?**

You can discuss this with your doctor or pharmacist if you have any concerns on the “off-label” use of medication that has been prescribed for you or your child.