FAQs

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High blood pressure

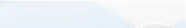
1. **Can high blood pressure (BP) be cured?**
   There is no cure for high BP,[1] but lifestyle modifications such as maintaining a healthy weight, exercising regularly, eating a healthy diet, eating less salt (ie, sodium-containing foods), getting sufficient rest, quitting smoking and reducing alcohol intake can help keep your BP under control.
   However, if your high BP is caused by another health problem (ie, secondary high BP), getting rid of your high BP is possible if the underlying cause is treated successfully.[1]
2. **Are BP medications addictive or harmful to my body?**
   Blood pressure medications are not addictive. They help lower your BP and maintain it at a stable range as long as you continue the medications. Your BP will go back up if you stop taking them. Some medications, however, may cause side effects such as light-headedness or dizziness. Talk with your doctor if you have any concerns about the medications you are taking.[2,3]
3. **Can I stop my medications if my BP readings have returned to normal?**
   Once you start your treatment, it is likely that you will be taking your medications for the rest of your life, even if your BP is under control. This is to prevent your BP from rising again or becoming higher. Good control of BP is important to prevent its complications.[4]
4. **How often do I need to see my doctor?**
   It is advisable for you to see your doctor on a regular basis (at least once a month for poorly controlled high BP, or once in every 3-6 months for those whose BP is under control, ie, less than 140/90 mmHg).[5]

High cholesterol

CHOLESTEROL

1. **Can I test my own cholesterol at home?**
   Yes, you can test your cholesterol at home using the home cholesterol tests; however, these tests only measure your total cholesterol. If you want to understand your risk for cardiovascular disease, you will still need to see your doctor for a full analysis of your cholesterol profile, which also includes high-density lipoprotein (HDL) cholesterol, low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol and triglyceride levels.[6]
2. **What can I do to lower my cholesterol?**
   Adopting healthy habits, such as eating a healthy diet, exercise and maintaining a healthy weight, can help lower your cholesterol levels. You may also be prescribed cholesterol-lowering drugs by your doctor for a better control of your cholesterol levels.[7]
3. **How does exercise affect my cholesterol levels in the blood?**
   Exercise that leads to significant weight loss can help lower your triglyceride levels and increase your HDL (good) cholesterol levels.[8]

Diabetes



1. **Can diabetes be cured?**
   Similar to high blood pressure, there is no cure for diabetes (both type 1 and type 2), but lifestyle modifications such as maintaining a healthy weight, exercising regularly, eating a healthy diet and quitting smoking can help keep your diabetes under control.[9]

2. **How often should I test my blood glucose level?**
   The frequency of testing varies depending on the types of medications that you are taking and personal conditions. Some recommendations for self-monitoring of blood glucose are shown below[10]:

Mode of treatment	**Breakfast**		**Lunch**		**Dinner**	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post/Pre-bed
Diet only	✓	✓		✓		✓
Oral antidiabetic agents	✓	✓		✓		✓
Insulin	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

   Ask your doctor to find out how often you should test your blood glucose.

3. **Can I take honey if I have diabetes?**
   A study found that consumption of natural honey may provide beneficial effects on body weight and blood lipids of people with diabetes, but it may also increase the level of average blood glucose concentration (glycated haemoglobin [HbA_{1c}]). Therefore, it should be consumed cautiously.[11]

4. **Can I take artificial sweeteners?**
   Artificial sweeteners can be found in diet drinks, baked goods, frozen desserts, candy, light yogurts and chewing gums. Being a replacement of sugar which is known to be high in calorie and carbohydrates, artificial sweeteners have been known to reduce the intake of the same, and reduce your cravings for sweet foods.
   However, you should remember that the sweetening power of artificial sweeteners is at least 100 times stronger than regular sugar. Hence, you should still limit its consumption.[12]

Counterfeit Medicines

What exactly are counterfeit medicines?[1]

Counterfeit, or fake, medicines are manufactured using incorrect or harmful ingredients. Counterfeit drugs are illegal and may be harmful to your health. These drugs do not adhere to Food and Drug Administration (FDA) or other regulatory standards or take other appropriate steps to ensure the medicines are safe and effective.

What are the dangers of taking counterfeit medicines?[2,3]

One of the biggest risks of counterfeit medicines is that patients may not get the therapeutic benefit expected from the product. For example, a drug you count on to lower your cholesterol may not actually provide any benefit at all because it doesn't contain the correct ingredients. Counterfeit medicines could be contaminated, have no medicine, have too little or too much medicine, or even contain the wrong medicine. These fake drugs may contain chalk, powdered concrete, and boric acid (or worse) and are sold as real drugs.

How do I know if I've purchased a counterfeit medicine?[3]

It is important to purchase prescription products from a pharmacy and pharmacist with whom you are familiar. In some cases, you may observe a different taste, consistency, or appearance of product than usual. It may be very difficult to know if the medicine you have purchased is a counterfeit. Fake medicines may appear identical to the real medicine.

How can I avoid buying counterfeit drugs[3]

The best way to avoid counterfeit drugs is to purchase prescription medicines from a licensed pharmacy from a reputable pharmacist. Don't buy medications from online pharmacies or pharmacies that sell medications without prescriptions.

What should I do if I think I've purchased a counterfeit[3]

Talk to your doctor, and then tell your pharmacist, if you notice anything unusual or if you have a different reaction to your medicine. You should also report suspected counterfeiting to the approved manufacturer of the medicine.

Generic Drugs

1. What is a generic drug?[1,2,3]

- A generic drug is usually defined as a "copy" of a branded drug product
- A generic drug is a medication created to be the same as an already marketed brand- name drug in dosage form, safety, strength, route of administration, quality, performance characteristics, and intended use
- The active ingredient or drug content is identical or "bioequivalent" (i.e. same or equivalent in terms of properties and usage), and works in the body the same way as the branded drug product
- The U.S. Food and Drug Administration, or FDA requires generic drugs to have the same active ingredient, strength, dosage form, and route of administration as the branded drug product

2. Are generic drugs as safe and effective as brand drugs?[1,4]

- Drug companies must show that the generic drug is either identical or otherwise bioequivalent to the brand drug, meaning they have the same quality, strength, purity and stability
- Some differences between generics and branded drug products are allowed such as shape, color, packaging, and a few other parameters to account for variability during manufacturing

3. How are generic drugs approved?[1,2]

- Drug companies can submit an abbreviated new drug application (ANDA) for approval to market a generic drug that is the same as (or bioequivalent to) the branded version. The ANDA process does not require the generic drug company to repeat animal and clinical research on ingredients or dosage forms already approved for safety and efficacy. However, the generic drug company must provide proof of active ingredients. To gain FDA approval, a generic drug must:
- contain the same active ingredient(s) as the branded drug (inactive ingredients such as fillers and dyes may vary)
- be identical in strength, dosage form, and route of administration
- have the same use indications
- be bioequivalent
- meet the same batch requirements for identity, strength, purity, and quality
- be manufactured under the same strict standards of FDA's good manufacturing practice regulations required for branded drug products

4. Why does a generic drug look different from the brand drug?[4,5]

- Generic drugs may differ from brand drugs in terms of color and flavor among other things, and the FDA ensures that they do not affect the way the drug works
- There is also a category of generics called Authorized Generics that are identical to the branded drug product in almost all aspects (e.g., size, shape, color, taste, smell, active and inactive ingredients). However, an authorized generic version of a tablet or capsule may have a different color or marking

5. Are all brand drugs available in generic form?[2,6]

- Not every branded drug product has a generic version
- Most branded drug products are developed under patent protection for up to 20 years. This means that no one else is allowed to make and sell the drug
- When the patent expires, other drug companies can start selling a generic version of the drug. But before that, FDA must test and approve the drug

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY
PATENTED
INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

6. How do I know if there is a generic for my brand prescription?[2,6]

- To find out if there is a generic equivalent for your brand drug, ask your doctor or pharmacist
- Always first speak to your doctor or pharmacist to see if a generic drug is right for you

7. Why are the names of brand drugs so different from the names of generic drugs?[2,6]

- Drug products usually have a chemical name, active ingredient, and brand name
- When a drug is first discovered, it is given a chemical name, which describes the atomic or molecular structure of the drug. Active ingredients are usually more complicated and harder to remember than brand names
- Many generic names are a shorthand version of the drug's chemical name, structure, or formula
- The brand name is created by the company and is usually shorter and easier to remember

Prescription medicine

1. I am experiencing a symptom that I think may be caused by my medicine. Can I take less of it?[1,2]

- You should never change the amount of medicine you take or stop taking it unless your healthcare provider tells you to do so. If you think your medicine is causing a symptom or side effect, let your healthcare provider know. Talk to your doctor about your medical conditions, the medicines you already take and any other health concerns.
- You should also report any medication side effects to your doctor

2. My prescription medicine is not making me feel better. Can I take more?[3,4]

- Never change how much medicine you take unless you are told to do so by your healthcare provider
- Medicines do not always work the same for everyone, so tell your healthcare provider if you are not feeling better

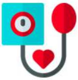
3. I ran out of refills for my prescription. Can I stop taking my medicine?[1,3]

- Only your healthcare provider can tell you if you no longer need to take a medicine
- In some cases, your healthcare provider may need to see you before he or she writes a prescription for more refills. It is important to note that stopping some medicines too soon can cause health problems. Get prescriptions refilled early enough to avoid running out of medicines

4. I feel better. Do I still need to take my medicine?[3]

- Never change how much medicine you take unless you are told to do so by your healthcare provider
- Medicines do not always work the same for everyone, so tell your healthcare provider if you are not feeling better

5. I don't feel sick when I forget to take my medicine. Does this mean I don't really need it?[3,5,6]



- Not necessarily. Many illnesses may not always have noticeable symptoms
- Some examples are high blood pressure, early glaucoma, and high cholesterol. In fact, if you have one of these conditions, you may not have even known about it until your healthcare provider told you. This means that if you missed a dose of your medicine, you might not feel a difference
- If you do not take care of your current medical condition(s), you may have more health problems in the future. For example, uncontrolled high blood pressure can lead to stroke, heart failure, heart attack, or kidney failure. Or if you do not take your medicine to control glaucoma, your eyesight may get worse. Always talk with your healthcare provider before you stop taking your medicine

6. What should I do if I forget to take my medicine?[1,4]

- For each of the medicine that you are prescribed with, it is important that you talk with your healthcare provider about what to do if you missed a dose
- There may be specific instructions for different medicines

7. Where should I store my medicine?[7]

- Keep your medicine in its original container and store it in a cool, dry place. In a dresser drawer, in a storage box, or on a closet shelf are usually good places
- Heat, light, air, and moisture can damage your medicine, so it is not recommended that you store your medicine in the bathroom cabinet
- If you keep your medicine in a kitchen cabinet, be sure to keep it away from the stove, sink, or hot appliances
- Your pharmacist will tell you if there are any special storage instructions for your medicine, such as refrigeration
- Remember to store all medicines where children can't see or reach them. Lock any cabinet or drawer where you keep your medicine

8. How long can I save my old medicine in case I need to take it again later?[7,8]

- You should never save your old medicine unless you have talked about it with your healthcare provider
- Even if you think you have the same illness as before, it may be different. The old medicine may no longer be the best medicine for you. Only your healthcare provider should decide which medicine you should take

9. My medicine recently expired. Can I still take it?[8]

- No. If it has passed, do not take the medicine
- Medicines that have expired may not work as well as it should and may no longer be safe to take. Be sure to check the expiration date on the label
- Medicines should not be disposed via wastewater or household waste. Ask your pharmacist how to dispose medicines no longer required. These measures will help to protect the environment

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