

## WILL I GET A SIDE EFFECT?

Almost all drugs used to treat any type of disease can cause side effects. This does not mean that everyone who takes a drug will experience side effects. It is hard to predict whether you will or will not experience a side effect. It depends on the medicine and how your body reacts.

Prescription medicines can enhance the quality of your life, keep people out of the emergency room, and can even save lives. But, medicines can also bring unwelcomed side effects. Some side effects are rare; others are more common, such as mild nausea or diarrhea, dizziness, etc. There are simple measures that can be taken to manage the more common side effects.

## LEARNING HOW TO MANAGE SIDE EFFECTS

Is it okay for me to stop taking the medication if I am experiencing side effects? Unfortunately, many people who develop a common side effect stop taking their medication without discussing it with their healthcare provider. It is important to remember that by stopping medication your medical condition could get worse.

Nearly all medications have side effects. When you begin taking a medication, it is important to know

- ✚ What are the potential side effects?
- ✚ If I experience a side effect, what can I do?
- ✚ Which symptoms should alert me to consult my healthcare provider?

When you receive your prescription, you should also get a Patient Information Sheet – or “how to take” instructions for that medication. This information is very important; read it thoroughly. By doing so, you will be able to recognize any side effects that may occur while you are taking this medication. It is also a good practice to re-read the Patient Information Sheet each time you refill your medication.

## ACTIONS YOU CAN TAKE

It is helpful to know what you should do about a possible side effect from the start. You should also know which side effects are safe to treat yourself and when to contact your healthcare provider. There are simple steps you can take to manage common side effects:

- ✓ **Record any side effects** – keep track of your side effects and talk about them with your healthcare provider during your next visit.
- ✓ **Nausea/Upset Stomach** – take medicine with food or milk – however, be sure to check with your provider that the medication may be taken this way. Also, avoid spicy foods and heavy meals. Drink water. Check with your provider or pharmacist about using over-the-counter medications.
- ✓ **Diarrhea** – Avoid caffeine, highly acidic foods and beverages, foods high in fiber, and spicy foods. Check with your provider or pharmacist about using over-the-counter medications.
- ✓ **Constipation** – Drink plenty of fluids; drink lots of water. Eat foods high in fiber such as fruits and vegetables. Exercise. Ask your provider or pharmacist about using over-the-counter medications.
- ✓ **Dry mouth** – drink water. Suck on ice chips or sour candy to promote more saliva.
- ✓ **Fatigue/lack of energy** – eat a balanced diet, get plenty of exercise, and sleep a minimum of 7 hours a night.

## WHO IS RX OUTREACH?

Rx Outreach is a non-profit organization that provides affordable medications to people in need. Through the Rx Outreach Program, low-income, uninsured patients have access to over 650 prescription medication strengths through our mail order pharmacy. Rx Outreach serves individuals and families whose income is 300% or less of the federal poverty level. Each year we serve over 80,000 people across all fifty states, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.