

Dental medication

Why does my dentist prescribe medication for certain treatments?

Your dentist prescribes medications for many reasons. While some drugs are formulated to fight certain oral diseases, others are used to prevent infections after surgical procedures such as tooth extractions and gum surgery. Certain drugs are used prior to dental treatment. These pre-medications are used to help fight infections, and also are used to control existing conditions such as heart murmurs and valve problems. Your dentist will discuss with you what medications you will be taking, when you will take them and why.

What should I find out about my medication?

Ask your dentist what you should look for after you've begun treatment. Ask about common side effects and what you should do if you experience them. Also ask about anything you should not take with the new drug, since the drug may interact with other prescriptions and over-the-counter medications and with certain foods. Ask the pharmacist any additional questions you did not ask the dentist. If you get a medication that looks different from the one you have been taking, speak up immediately.

When your dentist writes a new prescription, keep a record noting the brand name, generic name, the purpose, the dosage, how many times per day and for how long. Every prescription dispensed by a pharmacist comes with a patient information sheet describing everything you need to know about the drug. Read the sheet before beginning your prescription and read it each time before you take the drug. If you take several medications, keep a diary to check your daily intake and note the symptoms.

Am I experiencing a side effect or an allergic reaction to medication?

All allergic reactions to drugs are side effects, but not all side effects are allergic reactions. Some patients are allergic to certain drugs and can experience side effects that range from mild irritations, such as rashes, to more serious problems, such as breathing difficulties. Fortunately, fewer than 5 percent of allergic reactions are life threatening. Even expected side effects are fairly rare. An allergic reaction is the result of an overreaction in your body's immune system, which fights what it perceives to be a foreign substance. Not all side effects are allergy related and can occur regardless of your body's disposition toward them. By and large, these side effects are rare, and are expected by the drug's manufacturer. Depending on the drug, some side effects may include nausea, drowsiness or headaches.

Some of these effects are annoying, but don't cause serious health problems. They may include as nausea, drowsiness or mild cramping. Lowering the dosage or changing the drug's formula can reduce or eliminate these side effects. It is important to discuss these side effects with your dentist to determine if you are suffering from an allergic reaction or not. Don't discontinue a medication without talking with your dentist first.

What should my dentist know about my medical history?

Each year, the Food and Drug Administration approves more than 150 new drugs. Some drugs have the potential to interact with other dental medications and cause you harm or treatment failure. It is important to share with your dentist your medical history and the medications you are taking, especially for serious conditions such as kidney, lung, heart or liver disease.

Don't assume your dentist knows your medical history. The most common cause of drug prescription-related interactions is the doctor's lack of information about your medical history. Update and review your history every time you see the dentist. In addition to informing your dentist of past prescriptions, and tell him or her about any adverse reactions. Include any vitamins, supplements or herbal remedies you take on the list, as well as any diet plans.

What else should I know about my prescription?

When taking any medication prescribed by your dentist it is important to finish it. Many people take prescribed medicine, especially antibiotics, only until they feel better. Dosages are exact and are necessary to fight or prevent infections. By taking medication only until you feel better, all the drug has done is eliminate susceptible microorganisms and left the ones that tend to become drug-resistant. Ask your dentist before you take any nonprescription medications, vitamins, herbal remedies or dietary supplements. If you don't feel well after taking a medication, consult your dentist or pharmacist.