

# 10 Questions to Ask your Doctor or Pharmacist when you get a new Medication

**UOAA Update 10/2007**

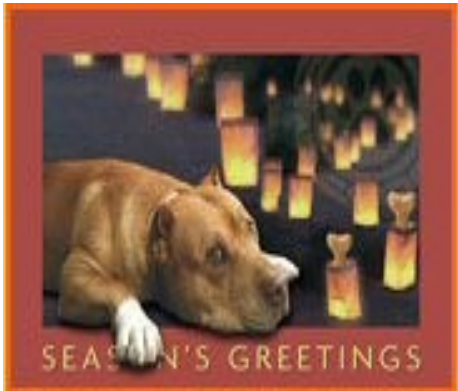
Prescription drugs are life-savers—but only if they're used correctly. In the U.S., nearly half of all medications *aren't* taken as directed. Fourteen percent of prescriptions never get filled; 13 percent are filled but never used; 29 percent are filled but not finished.

\* Do I need to finish the entire dosage you're prescribing for me? What do I do if I feel better before that?

[www.uoaa.org](http://www.uoaa.org)  
[www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org)  
[www.livingandlaughing.com](http://www.livingandlaughing.com)

- \* What's the name of the drug you're prescribing?
- \* Is a less expensive generic version of this drug available?
- \* How much will I be taking and how many times a day?
- \* What time of day is best to take the medication? Should it be taken with food or without?
- \* Does the medication need refrigeration?
- \* What side effects, if any, might I experience? What should I do if they occur?
- \* Is it safe to take this drug with other drugs or supplements? Can I drink alcohol while I am on this medication?
- \* What do I do if I miss a dose?
- \* How long will I be taking the drug?

**THE GREATEST EXERCISE FOR THE HUMAN HEART IS TO REACH DOWN AND LIFT ANOTHER UP**  
 AUTHOR UNKNOWN



## OSTOMY TRAVEL FACTS

- **KEEP** your medicine with you and not in your checked luggage.
- **BRING** more than enough medicine for your trip. Some ostomy sites recommended taking an additional seven to ten days just in-case you get snowed in or the airline has a "disaster" in scheduling.
- **REVIEW** your dosage schedule with your doctor or pharmacist before you leave and discuss whether you should make allowances for changes in time zones.



- **KEEP** a list of all your medicines and dietary supplements.
- **TAKE** three times the amount of ostomy supplies you will need, especially if you are traveling overseas. They are difficult to obtain and order in foreign lands and you "just never know" what your needs may be when traveling. The supplies are relatively light and pack easily without the boxes so it is better to be safe than sorry.
- **UOAA travel cards will be distributed in JAN.**

## Living with Your Ileostomy

By Lawrence P. Davis, M.D.

This article is from a talk about, *The Surgeon's Responsibility to You and Your Responsibility to the Surgeon*. The talk was on what a physician expects of an ileostomy patient.

"Being an ileostomate myself, I have jotted down things I experienced, and what I expect of you as you learn to cope"

Immediate post-op care...the most important thing the doctor expects is the patient's acceptance of the change in body image. He/she must accept the fact that he/she is changed for the better in most cases. One of the biggest hurdles with patients who will not even look at the stoma is to have him/her take care of it. This is the beginning of the road to recovery and complete recuperation. The patient should and must be independent by the time he/she leaves the hospital. The patient should have a satisfactory ostomy system with resource available for follow up care.

Motivate the patient to look at the positive effects of his/her operation. He/she is free of the disease; of contracting colon cancer; urgent diarrhea; cramping and pain. Most ileostomates say they are happy to be rid of 20 or more trips to the bathroom while sometimes getting there too late. Most ileostomy surgery is due to inflammatory bowel disease. Make him/her aware that he/she has not been mutilated, but changed for the better.

The next big challenge is "bagging the stoma". It is most important to find the best appliance for the patient. The patient needs to know that his/her stoma is going to change. After surgery, he/she will gain weight again resulting in additional adjustments to one's pouching system. The ET nurse should be the primary resource for patient consultation. An ET is an expert on post surgical ostomy care, and should fully be utilized.

It is very important to understand the challenges a surgeon faces. Keep in mind that the individual's health problems dictate the surgeon's techniques. Depending on the exact anatomy of each patient, he/she will have a different stoma located in a slightly or more dramatically different area on the abdomen than someone else. One does not swap dentures or eyeglasses, therefore one should not unfairly compare stomas. Patients should attend meetings at the local chapter of the United Ostomy Association. Learn all he/she can about ostomy care. The caring and sharing will help more than anything else.

Usually, the ileostomate has been on or tried special diets for years. After surgery, he/she is desirous to move onto his/her post-surgical life. However, there are foods that may cause concerns, gas or odors. The patient must be aware of correctly introducing foods into his/her diet once again. The patient should also be instructed on what procedures to implement in case of problems like food blockages, dehydration or injury to other parts of the body.

A correct routine in handling these concerns will provide the patient with the best quality of life after surgery.

## What to Drink with your Medications

10/07 UOAA UPDATE

How many times have you received a prescription with the instruction to "take as needed" or "take before meals?" Pretty vague, but many people do not stop to question further, assuming the medication will work, no matter with what they swallow it.

Acidic drinks, such as fruit juice or soda pop, may chemically destroy certain kinds of antibiotics, including penicillin, ampicillin, or erythromycin. Citrus fruit juices may reduce the effect of antidepressants, antihistamines or major tranquilizers by speeding their urinary excretion. Milk can interfere with a number of medicines. The laxative Dulcolax, for example, has a coating designed to ensure that the drug will

dissolve slowly within the intestine. But if the medication is taken with milk, which is alkaline, it may dissolve prematurely within the stomach, lose its cathartic action and irritate the sensitive stomach lining. Milk can also block the action of tetracycline. If a doctor fails to warn his patient not to take this antibiotic within an hour of any dairy product, he might be puzzled to hear the infection he was treating has not disappeared.

Even something as simple as tea, hot or cold, may cause problems. A woman given a mineral supplement to treat iron-deficiency anemia would probably be surprised to learn that the tannin in tea can undo the benefits of her iron pills.

To play it safe, you can always rely on GOOD OLD WATER!! Water will not interact with drugs or reduce their effectiveness.



## THE LESSON

A professor stood before his philosophy class and had some items in front of him. When the class began, wordlessly, he picked up a very large and empty mayonnaise jar and proceeded to fill it with golf balls. He then asked the students if the jar was full. They agreed that it was.

The professor then picked up a box of pebbles and poured them into the jar. He shook the jar lightly. The pebbles rolled into the open areas between the golf balls. He then asked the students again if the jar was full. They agreed it was.

The professor next picked up a box of sand and poured it into the jar. Of course, the sand filled up everything else. He asked once more if the jar was full. The students responded with an unanimous "yes."

The professor then produced two cups of coffee from under the table and poured the entire contents into the jar, effectively filling the Empty space between the sand. The students laughed.

"Now," said the professor, as the laughter subsided, "I want you to recognize that this jar represents your life. "The golf balls are the important things - Family, children, health, friends, and favorite passions - things that if everything else was lost and only they remained, your life would still be full.

"The pebbles are the other things that matter like your job, house, and car.

"The sand is everything else - the small stuff.

"If you put the sand into the jar first," he continued, "there is no room for the pebbles or the golf balls.

"The same goes for life. If you spend all your time and energy on the small stuff, you will never have room for the things that are important to you.

"So...Pay attention to the things that are critical to your happiness. Play with your children. Take time to get medical checkups. Take your partner out to dinner. Play another 18. There will always be time to clean the house and fix the disposal.

"Take care of the golf balls first - the things that really matter. Set your priorities. The rest is just sand."

One of the students raised her hand and inquired what the coffee represented. The professor smiled.

"I'm glad you asked. "It just goes to show you that no matter how full your life may seem, there's always room for a couple of cups of coffee with a friend."