

Using antiseizure medicines

Measuring medicines

Medicines come as tablets, capsules, powders, or liquids. The amount of medicine in a tablet, capsule, or liquid is important to know so the correct dose can be given. The amount is indicated on the label or on a sticker on the medicine packet. Look closely—it may be in small print! The amount of medicine contained in each tablet or capsule is commonly given in grams (g), milligrams (mg), or micrograms (mcg). For information about measuring liquids, see page 87.

$$1\text{g} = 1000\text{ mg (1 gram has 1000 milligrams)}$$

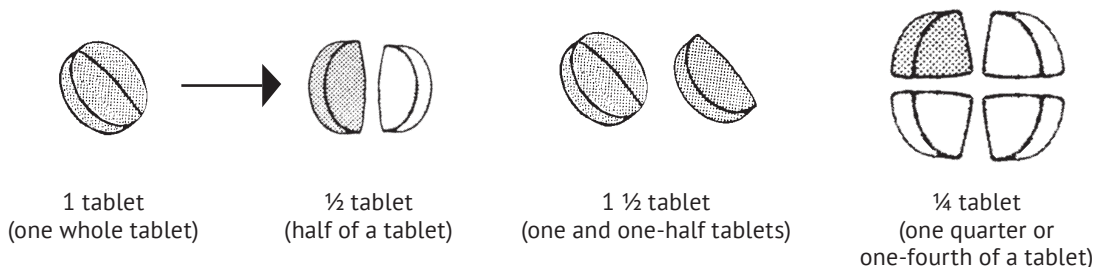
$$1\text{ mg} = 1000\text{ mcg (1 milligram has 1000 micrograms)}$$

When you combine the amount of medicine to take with how many times a day to take it, you get the daily dose.

$$\text{Daily dose} = \text{amount of medicine} \times \text{number of times taken each day}$$

If a medicine does not come in the exact amount you need, you may need to take pieces of a tablet or more than one tablet. It is usually too difficult to cut a tablet into more than 4 pieces.

Cutting tablets



If you need to cut tablets regularly, find out if you can purchase a small, inexpensive, pill-cutting tool to use at home.

Measuring liquid medicines

Doses for syrups, suspensions, injections in liquid form, or liquids taken by mouth will note how much medicine is to be taken, for example: 10 ml (milliliters) or 10 cc (cubic centimeters). A cubic centimeter is the same as a milliliter. Household spoons come in all different sizes and cannot be depended on as accurate measures. If a liquid medicine does not come with a special measuring spoon or dropper, take it to the pharmacy and ask them to measure exactly how much your spoon or small glass or container holds. Try as best you can to measure the exact dose of medicine.

1 tablespoon (Tbsp) = 15 ml

1 teaspoon (tsp) = 5 ml

1 Tbsp = 3 tsp

When instructions for a medicine say: Take 1 tsp, this means: Take 5 ml.

How often and when to take medicine

Different antiseizure medicines are effective in the body for different lengths of time. Some have effects that are longer-lasting, while others have effects that wear off more quickly. By taking antiseizure medicine at the same time every day, you are better able to keep a constant level of medicine in your body, which helps the medicine work best.



When I discuss taking antiseizure medicine, I talk with the person about how taking medicine at specific times helps to keep the level of medicine constant in the body. This is key to managing and controlling seizures.

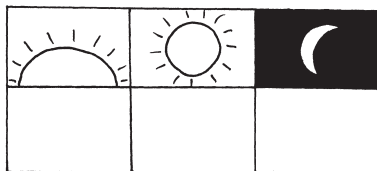
Taking a dose of antiseizure medicine more often or in a larger amount than recommended may make you feel sleepy, dizzy, nauseous, or slow. It may give you a headache or make you feel distant or uninterested in things. But these may also be side effects of a correct dose of antiseizure medicine. If your medicine is causing these reactions and they are difficult to manage, talk to a health worker.

If you take medicine once a day, get in the habit of taking it before going to bed or when you get up in the morning. Unless the instructions specify a certain time, find a time that works for you that you will remember.

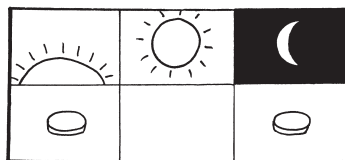
If a medicine needs to be taken two times a day, take it in the morning and 12 hours later in the evening.

If a medicine needs to be taken three times a day, take it 8 hours apart throughout the day. This may mean taking the first dose early in the morning or the third dose late at night.

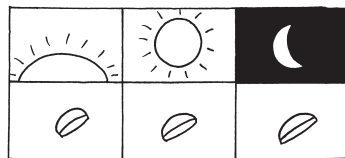
If you are writing a note for someone about how much medicine to take each day and when to take it, pictures can be helpful. Draw instructions like these and explain that 2 times means 12 hours between doses, and 3 times means 8 hours between doses. Use the spaces under the pictures showing sunrise, daytime, and nighttime to show how much medicine to take. Explain carefully. For example:



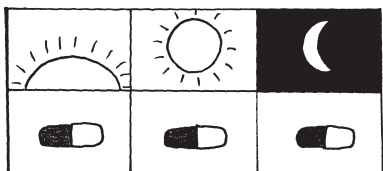
This means take 1 tablet 2 times a day. Take 1 tablet in the morning, and then another tablet 12 hours later in the evening.



This means take ½ (one-half) tablet 3 times a day. Take ½ tablet in the morning, ½ tablet 8 hours later during the day, and ½ tablet 8 hours later at night.



This means take 1 capsule 3 times a day. Take 1 capsule in the morning, 1 capsule 8 hours later during the day, and 1 capsule 8 hours later at night.



Remember: Taking more medicine, or taking it more often, may not be better for your seizure control. But it will make you run out of medicine faster.