

# Questions to Ask Your Doctor



If you have been diagnosed with schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, or another mental illness, you may have many questions for your doctor. To help you organize your thoughts, here is a list of questions to think about asking:

- What is my illness?
- What are the symptoms?
- What might have caused my illness?
- How might this illness affect me over time?
- What other medical problems often go along with this illness?
- What are the risk factors for this illness?
- How can you tell I have this illness?
- How is this illness treated?
- What will the treatment do for me?
- Are there side effects from the treatment?
- What are my options if this treatment fails?
- What will happen if I do not do anything about my illness?
- What can I do to help myself?
- Where can I go for help?
- Where can I go to learn more about my illness?

Feel free to raise any other questions or concerns you may have about your illness with your doctor. The more you know about your illness, the better prepared you will be to deal with it.

## Getting Help

Not sure where to go for more help? Talk to someone who has worked with mental illness, such as a doctor, social worker, or church counselor. Other types of people and places that can help include:

- Your health plan
- Community mental health centers
- Hospital psychiatry departments
- Social service agencies
- Private clinics
- Employee assistance programs
- Local medical and/or psychiatric societies
- State hospital outpatient clinics

# Questions to Ask Your Doctor

If your doctor puts you on 1 or more medications for a mental illness, here are some questions you may want to ask your doctor:

- What is the name of the medication, and what is it supposed to do?
- What are my chances of getting better with this treatment?
- How and when do I take it?
- How will I know if the medication is working?
- How long will I have to take it?
- Can I take this medication if I am pregnant or planning to have a baby soon?
- What foods, drinks, other medications, or activities should I avoid while taking this medication?
- What are the side effects?
- What should I do if I have side effects?
- Will this medication affect my sleep, my sex life, or my appetite?
- How will this medication interact with other medications I'm already taking?
- What should I do if I miss a dose?
- Can I have beer, wine, or other alcoholic drinks?

**Never stop taking a medication without your doctor's help.**

## Before you get a prescription, make sure your doctor knows:

- Your medical history
- What other medications you are taking
- If you have ever taken medications for a mental illness in the past
- If you are pregnant or planning to have a baby
- Past problems with medications or food side effects
- Other health conditions you may have (such as diabetes, heart disease, allergies, etc)
- If you are on a special diet or take supplements
- If you smoke, drink alcohol, or do "street drugs" (such as cocaine, pot, etc)

## Remember

It is very important to ask your doctor any questions you may have. The more you know about your mental illness and the medications you will be taking for it, the better prepared you will be to take care of yourself. You should always take medications exactly the way your doctor tells you to.