

The mission of the **Medicines Authority** is the **protection of public health** in Malta through the **regulation** of medicinal products and pharmaceutical activities.



THINGS YOU NEED TO **KNOW** ABOUT **MEDICINES**



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PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARIAT FOR
CONSUMERS, FAIR COMPETITION, LOCAL COUNCILS
AND PUBLIC DIALOGUE



The information contained in this leaflet is for education and information purposes only.



WHAT IS A MEDICINE?

- A medicine is a product that is suitable for treatment or prevention of diseases, or a product that can be used in or given to humans to modify body functions or to make a medical diagnosis.

WHAT ARE THE INGREDIENTS IN MEDICINAL PRODUCTS?

- A medicinal product is composed of one or more active ingredients and other substances (excipients) which make up the rest of the product.
- An active ingredient is the substance in a medicinal product that is biologically active and produces the effect.

HOW ARE MEDICINES REGULATED IN MALTA?

- For a medicine to be placed on the Maltese market it needs to be authorised.
- For an authorisation to be granted, pharmaceutical companies submit data on the quality, safety and efficacy of their manufactured medicine to the Medicines Authority.
- The data contained within the application is assessed and if the medicine is evaluated to have more benefits than risks, an authorisation is granted.

HOW SHOULD MEDICINES BE STORED?

- It is important to always read the storage conditions of the medicine and store accordingly.
- Storage conditions are usually printed on the medicine's package (such as the cardboard box) or on the package leaflet inside the box.
- Unless specifically stated that the medicine should be kept in a refrigerator, medicines should be stored in a dry cupboard away from sunlight at the recommended temperature. Products recommended to be stored 2-8°C are to be stored in a refrigerator.
- Do not keep your medicines in your bathroom. There is a tendency to have increased temperatures and humid conditions that affect the quality of medicines.
- Do not keep your medicines in your kitchen on top of a heat source (such as an oven or the window sill). There is a tendency to have increased temperature or light conditions that affects the medicines' quality.

WHAT IS THE PACKAGE LEAFLET?

- The package leaflet that accompanies a medicine contains information on what the medicine is for, what one needs to know before taking the medicine, how to take the medicine, some possible side effects that can be experienced, how the product should be stored and where to find further information.
- The Medicines Authority publishes package leaflets for medicines placed on the Maltese Market. These can be downloaded for free from: www.knowyourmedicines.gov.mt

WHAT IS AN EXPIRY DATE/SHELF LIFE?

- Every medicine has an expiry date. The expiry date refers to the time period during which the medicine can be consumed with an assurance that the medicine is still of good quality.
- The expiry date is only applicable when the medicine has been kept in its original container and not opened, and stored at the recommended conditions as described in the package leaflet.
- Once opened, medicines such as solutions, syrups, suspensions, creams, gels, ointments, eye/ear/nose preparations should be used within a specific number of days. It is important to consult your pharmacist and/or the package leaflet inside the box to know for how many days the product can be stored once it is opened. You should also write the day when the medicine was opened so as not to forget when the medicine should not be used any more.

I HAVE EXPERIENCED A SIDE EFFECT WHEN USING MY MEDICINE. WHAT DO I DO?

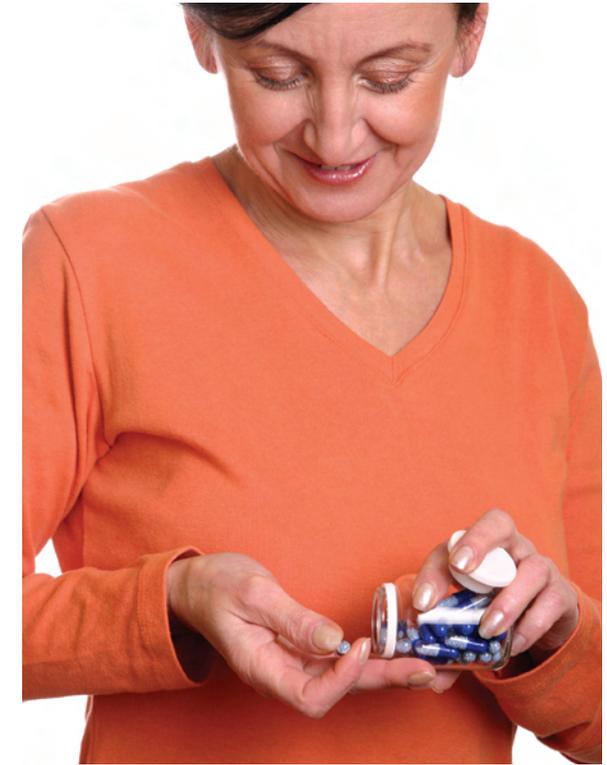
- Most of us will not experience any problems when taking medicines. However, all medicines have some risks associated with their use and a small number of people may develop side effects. Not everyone gets side effects in the same way. In many cases, side effects to medicines are mild and will go away within a few days.
- If you are experiencing side effects which you did not expect due to their nature or intensity, before you decide to stop taking your medicine, you should contact your doctor or pharmacist as they will be able to guide you.
- Suspected side effects from the use of a medicine are to be reported to the Medicines Authority. Reporting side effects is an important way how regulators identify potential safety issues. Side effects can be reported by the public here: <http://www.medicinesauthority.gov.mt/pub/adr.doc>

I HAVE FORGOTTEN HOW TO TAKE MY MEDICINE. WHAT DO I DO?

- You need to contact your doctor or pharmacist, they would be able to help you. Information on safe use and how to take your medicine can be found in your package leaflet. Sometimes your doctor may decide to prescribe your medicine in a certain manner. Recommendations by your doctor should be followed since your doctor will use the product as deemed best for you.

MY MEDICINE WORKED ON ME. CAN I RECOMMEND IT TO SOMEONE ELSE?

- No - Your medicine has been prescribed and dispensed for you or your child, and you should not give it to anyone else. It may harm them, even if their symptoms are the same as yours.



MY DOSING DEVICE (SUCH AS A MEASURING SPOON) HAS BROKEN/MISPLACED. HOW DO I TAKE MY MEDICINE?

- All medicines have specific dosing recommendations. Some medicines have specific devices. In case you need a dosing device, your pharmacist would be able to help you.
- It is useful to note that a common kitchen teaspoon would contain an approximate volume of 5 ml.

HOW DO I DISPOSE OF MY MEDICINES?

- Medicines should not be disposed of via wastewater or household waste. Ask your pharmacist how to dispose of medicines no longer required. These measures will help to protect the environment. Consumers may take medicines for disposals at the WasteServ Civic Amenity Sites.

WHERE DO I FIND USEFUL INFORMATION ABOUT MEDICINES IN MALTA?

- Information on medicines, package leaflets as well as on ongoing safety issues on medicines registered in Malta is available here: www.knowyourmedicines.gov.mt
- Your doctor and pharmacist would also be able to help you.