

Pre-Reading Discussion: Can taking over-the-counter or prescription medications be dangerous? How do you know how much to take, and how often? How do you find out what the risks and precautions are? Who can you ask if you have questions about medications?

Reading Passage Section 15: Following Directions and Dosages For Medications

You are making good health decisions if you follow the instructions for taking both prescription and over-the-counter medications.

The directions and **dosages** for prescription and over-the-counter medications are written information about taking the medication. Directions may be written on the medication container, the medication label or a separate piece of paper. It is dangerous to your health if you don't understand the directions and dosages for prescription and over-the-counter medications.

- Directions will tell you the dosage you can take. The dosage is how much of the medication to take and how often to take the medication. For example, the dosage is to put 2 drops of medication in each eye 2 times a day.
- Directions will tell you how to take medication. For example, you take some pills on an empty stomach, which means taking the pills 1 hour before eating or 2 hours after eating.
- Directions will also tell you how long to take medication. For example, if the directions for pain medication are to "Take the medicine as needed," then you will take the medication only when the pain is very bad. If the directions are "Take 3 pills a day for 10 days," then you must take the medication for the full 10 days, even if you feel better after 4 days.

If you don't understand the directions or dosages, you should ask the pharmacist or your health professional about how to take the medications.

