



**KOLL PÅ  
LÄKEMEDEL**

## WISE QUESTIONS

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About pharmaceutical treatment for  
older patients  
to ask their healthcare provider

These wise questions are aimed at older people who take medicine. As people grow older, it becomes increasingly common that they need to take medicine. Some people take medicine for short periods, but people who have many diseases may need to take many medicines for a longer period of time. The more medicines people take, the greater the risk of experiencing side effects and that the treatment may not produce the desired result. Some medicines are also inappropriate for older people. Treatment of the elderly with many diseases poses challenges for both doctors and patients.

It is important for you and your doctor to have a trusting relationship and to be in agreement in order to achieve effective treatment.

The doctor needs to know any concerns that you, as a patient, may have about your illness and its treatment. Many problems can be solved by asking the right questions. In fact, active and engaged patients often receive better treatment than patients who are silent and passive. Meanwhile, it is not always easy to remember all the questions you may wish to ask. As a patient, you may find this Wise Questions brochure to be helpful if you need tips about what questions to ask.

## Choose questions and note the answers

Below are a number of suggestions to help you become a more active patient. The questions are organised under headings to make it easier for you to navigate. Choose any question(s) that may be appropriate for you to ask the next time you see your doctor. Jot down the answer and notes about how you are treated. If you have specific questions about your illness and its treatment, write them down before you visit your doctor.

**Always ask questions so you are sure that you understand how and why you take your medicines!**

## You should understand how and why you take your medicines

QUESTIONS	COMMENTS
<i>Why am I taking this medicine?</i>	The doctor should write the indication on the prescription.
<i>Will the medicine cure, alleviate, or reduce the risk of illness?</i>	Many medicines reduce the risk of illness, but do not provide a cure.
<i>How will I know the medicine is working?</i>	In many cases, you will not notice anything; the effects may need to be measured through blood tests, etc.
<i>What is the treatment goal of the medicine you are prescribing?</i>	For instance, your blood pressure should not be higher than 140/90, or your blood sugar should not exceed a certain level.
<i>When and how will you follow up to see if the treatment goal has been achieved?</i>	At the recheck visit to see the doctor or nurse, or by telephone.
<i>How long should I take the medicine?</i>	Patients must know whether they need to take a medicine for the rest of their lives, as a short course of treatment, or when needed.
<i>I won't remember everything you said by the time I get home. Could you write down the most important points?</i>	You have the right to receive information in writing. Ask the doctor to print out your current medication list, or pick up a list of your prescription drugs at your pharmacy.
<i>Will you write what the medicines are intended to treat on the containers?</i>	You have the right to receive information in writing. Whatever the doctor writes on the prescription is automatically printed on the label from the pharmacy.
<i>Did you prescribe enough medicine to last until the next time we meet?</i>	It costs time and money for both you and the healthcare personnel if you have to call to get more medicine.
<i>I need help to understand the package information leaflet. Can you help me?</i>	The pharmacist at the pharmacy or the doctor can help you.

## Discuss the benefits and disadvantages of your medicines

### QUESTIONS

### COMMENTS

*How do I know that the medicine is benefitting me?*

You should feel certain that the medicine you take is beneficial. The benefits can vary for different illnesses. You can also request a personal medication counselling session at your pharmacy.

*Is there anything special that I need to think about when I take this medicine?*

Some medicines should be taken with food, others should not. With some medicines, alcohol should be avoided. When taking some medicines, you should not drive a car.

*Has this medicine been tested on, or is it appropriate for, older people?*

Many medicines have not been tested on older patients and should be avoided by elderly individuals.

*Can any of my medicines result in drug interactions?*

Interactions = medicines that are incompatible. The more medicines you take, the greater the risk.

*Will this treatment prevent me from doing the things I want to do?*

This question is important when a new medicine is prescribed.

*Can I drive a car if while taking this medicine?*

This is important to know if you drive a car. The question mainly applies to pain relievers and tranquilisers.

*Can I become addicted to the medicines?*

This question is important to ensure that you do not develop an addiction.

*What happens if I forget to take the medicine?*

For most medicines (though not all), occasionally forgetting to take them will not cause any problems.

*What are the most common side effects that I might experience? What should I do then?*

It is important to know that you are doing the right thing if you experience side effects. The PHASE-20 self-assessment tool allows you to describe how you experience your pharmaceutical treatment. (See [kollpalakemedel.se](http://kollpalakemedel.se)) Bring the list with you when you see the doctor.

*Of all the medicines I take, which ones are the most important?*

This question is important if you take many medicines. Not all medicines are equally important.

## If you feel you have too many medicines

### QUESTIONS

*Do I need this many medicines?*

### COMMENTS

Ask the doctor to specify which medicines are most important, less important, or should only be taken as needed.

*I have many medicines. Do you accept responsibility for ensuring that they are compatible with one another?*

Medicines should not interfere with each other.

*Why should I continue taking the medicine now that my blood pressure is good?*

It is a good idea to have this explained so that you don't do anything wrong.

*Why do I need to take two medicines for my blood pressure? Isn't one enough?*

More exercise, weight loss and stress reduction can reduce the need for medicines.

*Why do I need to take two medicines for my heart? Isn't one enough?*

It is a good idea to have this explained so that you don't do anything wrong.

*Is it good for me to take so many medicines at my age?*

If you take too many medicines the doctor may be able to eliminate those that are less important.

Ask the doctor for a medication Review if you take more than 5 medicines and are over the age of 75 – it's your right.



## Some medicines are inappropriate for older people

### QUESTIONS

### COMMENTS

*There are medicines that the National Board of Health and Welfare says are inappropriate for older people. Am I taking any of them?*

All of these drugs are on the “Unwise Drug List” that you can find at [www.kollpalakemedel.se](http://www.kollpalakemedel.se) or in the “Wise Rights” brochure.

*Have you made sure that all of my medicines are appropriate for me?*

This question is important if you take many medicines.

*I have had this medicine in the past. Can't I continue taking it?*

This is a common question if the doctor wants to eliminate inappropriate medicines.

*Are there any alternatives to this inappropriate medicine?*

This question is important if you take prescription medicines that are on the list of drugs that are inappropriate for older patients.

## Other wise questions

### QUESTIONS

### COMMENTS

*Why do I see a different doctor each time?*

Seeing the same doctor each time provides a sense of security and improves treatment.

*Why can't I speak to the doctor who knows me?*

When you make your appointment, ask to see the doctor you have previously seen.

*Why do you check to see whether the medicine is helping?*

In order to know that you are taking the right medicine and the right dosage. And to make sure that the medicine has provided the desired effect.

*Different doctors say different things – how am I supposed to know what is right?*

It is a good idea for someone to take the time to explain the differences. If you are uncertain you can request a medication review, or schedule a counselling session at the pharmacy.

*Can you prescribe an inexpensive medicine that I can afford?*

The pharmacy can also help by offering a partial payment plan.

*Can't I get a starter package to test the medicine?*

It is a good idea to begin with a small, less expensive package, in case you have to switch to a different medicine later on.

*Can you help me so that I don't get a new medicine each time I go to the pharmacy?*

The doctor can mark the prescription so that substitutions are not permitted.

*Is medicine my only treatment option?*

Sometimes lifestyle treatment is better – smoking cessation, exercise, normal weight, good sleep and stress reduction.

*What is your first and last name?*

Write down the answer so that you remember it the next time you call.

The questions cover many different problems that may not apply to you. Choose the questions that fit your situation and ask them the next time you see the doctor.

Wise questions can be discussed at pensioner organisation meetings, or why not form a study group based on these questions, perhaps using roleplay to test how it feels to ask these questions. With time you will improve at asking questions, which will improve the likelihood that you will receive good pharmaceutical treatment.

**Don't forget to write down the questions that you want to ask the doctor!**

More information and contact details are available at [www.kollpalakemedel.se](http://www.kollpalakemedel.se)

This brochure is available on the website in pdf format.

Contact: [kollpalakemedel@apoteket.se](mailto:kollpalakemedel@apoteket.se)

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