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BY PATRICIA KENNEDY, RN

Know Your Meds

he high cost of medications is on everyone's mind. Happily, there is something every person with MS can do right now. It might even save some money. It can definitely prevent potentially harmful drug interactions.

The strategy begins with good record keeping. Do you know all the medications you take? This includes prescription drugs from doctors and dentists—plus every over-the-counter remedy and herbal, vitamin, or other dietary supplement you use, no matter who suggested it might help you.

We've created a form you can copy. If you have access to the Web, go to www.nationalmssociety.org/pdf/Brochures/DrugChart.pdf and download a few copies. If not, telephone your chapter and ask for some.

Keep these records and bring them with you to your next physician visit, where you can ask for answers to these questions:

- Can I eliminate anything I'm taking?
- Can I substitute a generic for any of the brand-name drugs?

- Are the doses and special directions correct?
- Could any interactions be blunting drug effectiveness? If so, how can I avoid them?
- From any of my prescriptions? (Certain regular medications should be stopped on occasion to give the body a rest and provide your prescribing physician a chance to see if effectiveness has peaked. But other medications must be taken continually, without interruption, even if the drug seems to do very little.)

Be sure to tell your physician about:

- → Troubling side effects. Changes in type of drug, timing, or dosage could make a big difference in your life.
- ◆ Any problems swallowing, injecting, or remembering your drug schedule.
- ◆ Any new diet or food regimen you have started.
- ♦ Any changes in your exercise routines.

Get your money's worth by getting the most from the medications you really need. To learn more about the basics, go back to "Pharmacy 101" on page 42. ■