

The Five Steps to Coping with Side Effects

- 1. Contact Your Treatment Team:** Talk with your prescriber, nurse, or a member of your treatment team that you can reach quickly and easily. To solve the problem, you'll probably need to talk to your prescriber. However, you may need to talk to someone else on your treatment team first. It's best to be prepared and keep a list of treatment team members' names and contact numbers.
- 2. Describe the Problem:** It's helpful to tell your treatment team members about the trouble you're having and how much it bothers you.
 - A. What Bothers You:** Explain the problem.
 - B. How Much It Bothers You:** Explain whether this is a problem that bothers you just a little or if it bothers you so much that you don't want to keep taking the medicine.

Example (1): "This problem is annoying, but I'll put up with it if the medicine does a good job of controlling my symptoms."

Example (2): "This problem really bothers me a lot. I'm not sure I want to keep taking the medicine if the problem can't be solved."
- 3. Ask Questions:** Find out what you need to know to understand this problem better.
 - A. Side Effects:** Is this problem a medicine side effect, or is it caused by something else?
 - B. Serious:** Is this a serious problem, or is it just bothersome or annoying?
 - C. Temporary:** Will this problem go away with time, or is it likely to keep happening if nothing is done about it?

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(continued)

- 4. Ask for Solutions:** Find out what can be done to solve this problem. Depending on what your prescriber thinks might be best, possible solutions may include:
 - A. Cope:** Is there something you can do to deal with the problem?
 - B. Decrease:** Would it help to decrease the dose of medicine, or would the symptoms of your illness get worse?
 - C. Add:** Is there another medicine that could be added that will keep the problem from happening?
 - D. Switch:** Is there a different medicine you could take that's less likely to cause this problem?

- 5. Come to an Agreement:** Work with your treatment team to reach an agreement about what will be done. Keep your part of the agreement.