

Timing is Everything

Taking all your medications first thing in the morning may make it easier to remember, but you may not receive the most benefit from this method. Certain medications work best when taken in the morning while others will see the most success when dosed in the evening. Just when will depend on what part of the body the drug affects. In fact, there's a "biological clock" for every cell in the body, each with its own schedule. Proper timing of medications used in the treatment and management of arthritis, asthma, high blood pressure, cancer and heartburn for example can increase their effectiveness and minimize their side effects.

Rheumatoid arthritis is an inflammatory condition that is characterized by pain and stiffness in the joints that builds overnight and peaks in the morning. To maximize the effects of anti-inflammatory drugs, they are best taken an hour before bedtime or waking. Corticosteroids used in more severe cases of rheumatoid arthritis are best taken in the morning.

Osteoarthritis sufferers tend to have pain that worsens throughout the day. It makes sense to take anti-inflammatory medications starting in the morning and continuing through mid-day to prevent evening flare-ups.

Hypothyroidism is a common condition in North America, among both males and females. Symptoms of fatigue, weight gain, depression, and hair loss are helped with a thyroid supplement that is most effective if taken first thing in the morning on an empty stomach.

Medications to prevent and treat osteoporosis are also best taken first thing in the morning. To obtain the most benefit such medications, known as bisphosphonates, are to be taken on an empty stomach, at least 30 minutes before any food, drink or medication other than water.

Many heart problems occur in the early morning hours and blood pressure tends to be highest for most people at daybreak. Some drugs are best taken upon waking. Long-acting versions of a number of anti-hypertensive medications have been created to allow consistent levels of the drug to remain in the body and preventing early morning highs and night time spikes in blood pressure. Some medications used to lower blood pressure, such as diuretics or water pills, increase the need to urinate and therefore should be taken in the morning as they may interfere with sleep. Some seniors may experience nighttime lows in blood pressure, so be sure to consult a pharmacist about the most appropriate time to take blood pressure and heart medications.

Heartburn symptoms caused by increased stomach acid varies among individuals. Symptoms can occur at any time through out the day, and medications act differently. Short acting acid lowering drugs such as Zantac® (ranitidine) or Pepcid® (famotidine) work quite quickly, so they should be taken closer to the onset of symptoms. For

example, if symptoms are worse at night, these drugs should be taken in the evening. However, medications known as proton pump inhibitors such as Losec® (omeprazole) or Prevacid® (lansoprazole) are best taken in the morning as their effects last up to 24 hours. Be wary of using antacids while taking other medications as they can interact with many drugs.

And lastly, if you have trouble sleeping, talk to your pharmacist about the timing of any of your medications. Common prescription and over-the-counter drugs can keep you up at night. Medications such as those used to treat asthma, beta-blockers and decongestants can all keep you awake. Ask your pharmacist for suggestions as to the best time to take your medications to maximize their effectiveness and minimize their side effects. And remember, timing IS everything.