

Medications & Stroke Recovery: What We Need to Know

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Medications in Stroke Recovery

Goal: Empower you with knowledge about common post-stroke medications

- Why take them
- How they help
- Possible side effects
- Important interactions

Confident, informed conversations with your healthcare team.

Stroke in the U.S.

- **~795,000 strokes annually**

 - 610,000 first strokes

 - 185,000 recurrent strokes

- **~6.3 million U.S. adults** living with a history of stroke

- Highest prevalence among adults **≥65 years**

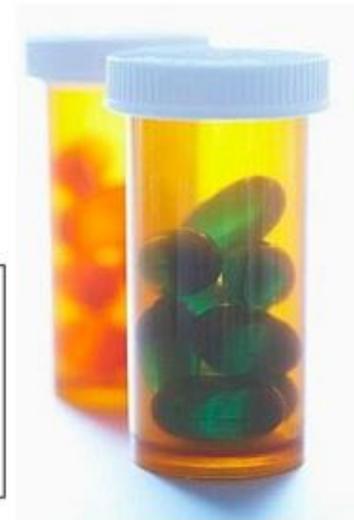
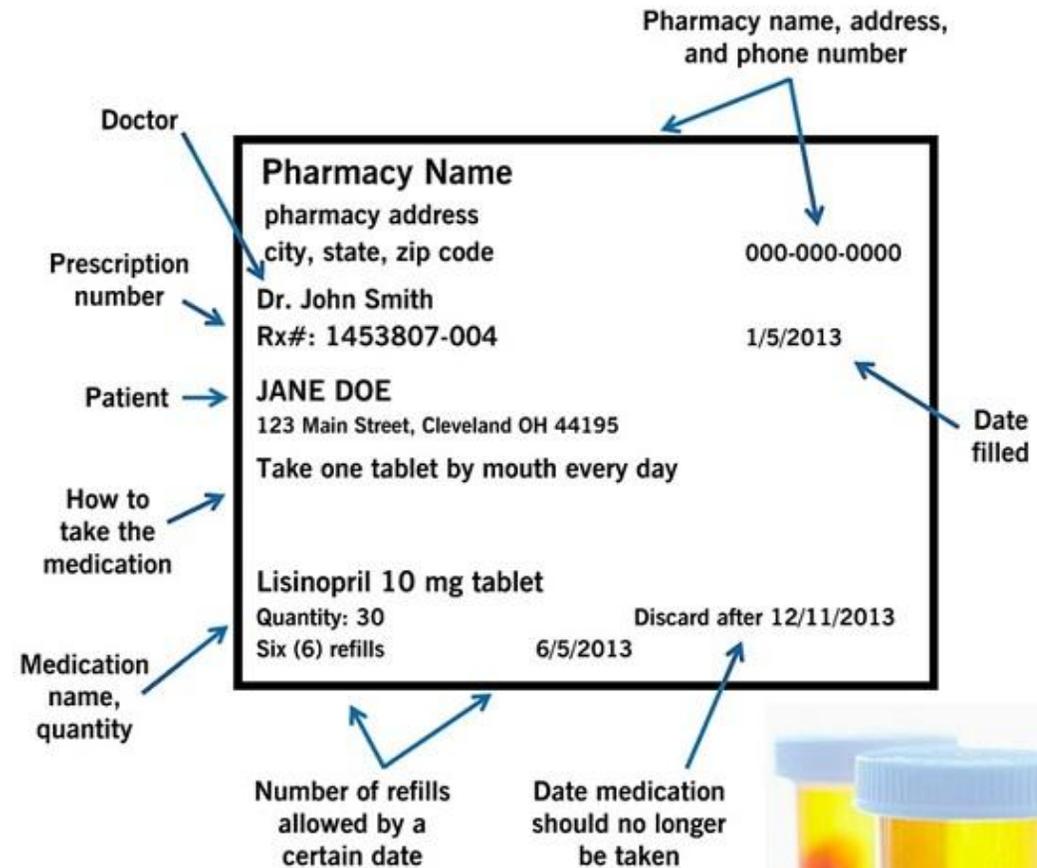
Why this matters: prevention of a second stroke is critical

Why Talk About Medications?

- After a stroke, medication lists often grow.
- Understanding **why** you take each medication, its **benefits**, and its **risks** is crucial for:
 - Recovery
 - Preventing another stroke
 - Protecting overall health
- **Theme: “Knowledge is Power.”**

How to Read Prescription Label

How to Read a Prescription Medication Label



All prescription medication labels include the above information. Your prescription label may have a different format than the one shown. The prescription number (Rx#) is usually printed in the upper left hand corner of the pharmacy label. Become familiar with your prescription medication labels.

Reference:
ClevelandClinic.org

How to Read Prescription Label

- **At the Pharmacy: Do a "Brown Bag Check"**
- **At Home: Use the "Teach-Back" Method**
- **Use Your Tools:**
 - Phone alarms
 - AM/PM pill organizers
 - Medication lists

There is no "wrong" question.

Safety depends on understanding the meds.

Mood & Mind: Antidepressants After Stroke

Common Examples

Lexapro (escitalopram); Wellbutrin (bupropion); Prozac (fluoxetine);
Celexa (citalopram); Pristiq (desvenlafaxine)

Key Points

- Can improve energy and quality of life
- Some may cause fatigue or weight gain
- Some may increase bleeding risk when combined with aspirin

Take Away

Mood changes are common after stroke. Speak up—treatment helps.

Blood Thinners (Anticoagulants & Antiplatelets)

Common Examples

Coumadin (warfarin); Eliquis (apixaban); Plavix (clopidogrel); Aspirin

Key Points

- Warfarin requires regular blood tests
- Newer agents often do not require routine blood monitoring
- Some may increase bleeding risk when combined with aspirin
- Always tell your doctor and dentist you take these.

Take Away

Often lifelong. Know your medication and its safety rules.

Statins: Cholesterol & Stroke Prevention

Common Examples

Lipitor (atorvastatin) ; Crestor (rosuvastatin calcium)

Key Points

- Benefits strongly outweigh risks for most stroke survivors
- Possible muscle aches
- Liver function monitored by blood work
- Do not stop suddenly—talk to your doctor if symptoms occur

Take Away

A cornerstone of stroke prevention.

Blood Pressure & Heart Medications

Common Examples

- Lisinopril, Amlodipine, Metoprolol, Labetalol, Chlorthalidone

Key Points

- High blood pressure is the #1 modifiable stroke risk factor
- Side effects may include: dizziness, fatigue, swelling, cough (ACE inhibitors)

Take Away

Blood pressure control is non-negotiable.

Hormones, Birth Control & Stroke Risk

Common Examples

- Yaz; Syeda; Yuvaferm

Key Points

- Estrogen-containing pills slightly increase clot risk
- Often stopped after a stroke
- Vaginal estrogen has minimal systemic absorption

Take Away

Discuss all hormone therapies with your neurologist and OB/GYN.

Weight & Metabolism

Common Examples

- Mounjaro

Key Points

- Improve blood sugar
- Promote weight loss
- Support cardiovascular health

Take Away

Managing weight and diabetes reduces future stroke risk. These medications require supervision.

Additional reading: [GLP-1 Side Effects, Safety, and Real-World FDA Data \(Ozempic, Wegovy, Zepbound\) | MeMeds](#)

Nerve Pain, Seizures & Headaches

Common Examples

- Keppra; Neurontin; Topamax; Baclofen; Ubrogepant

Key Points

- Some may affect mood
- Some may cause dizziness or cognitive “fog”
- Kidney function may affect dosing

Take Away

Post-stroke pain/conditions are common. Report side effects—many alternatives exist.

Everyday Medications & Chronic Conditions

Common Examples

- Flonase; Claritin; Guaifenesin

Key Points

- Managing all health conditions improves recovery
- Some cold medications can raise blood pressure

Take Away

Always maintain a complete medication list, including OTC drugs and supplements.

You are a partner in your care

Ask:

What is this for?

Is it lifelong?

What are the risks or alternatives?

Use one pharmacy — pharmacists are your safety net.

Know: prevention vs. symptom relief.

Key Safety Takeaways

- **Bleeding risk is real on blood thinners**
- **Blood pressure & cholesterol control are critical**
- **Review hormone therapies**
- **Report side effects**
- **Always understand the “why” behind each medication**

Medication Analyzer Tool

[MeMeds Medication Analyzer](#)

<https://digihealthandme.com/medication>

Thank You & Resources

- **Your Best Resource:**

- Your healthcare team—neurologist, primary care, pharmacist
 - Your support community, Circle of Rights!

- **Reliable Information:**

- American Stroke Association
 - National Stroke Association

- **Next Steps:**

- Review your own medication list this week
 - Write down your questions
 - Bring them to your next appointment

Top 10 Questions Stroke Patients Should Ask

- What is this medication for?
- Is this preventing another stroke or treating symptoms?
- How long will I need to take it?
- What are the most common side effects?
- What serious side effects should I watch for?
- How does this interact with my other medications?
- What happens if I miss a dose?
- Are there safer or lower-cost alternatives?
- Do I need blood tests or monitoring?
- When should I call you?