

# Retaking Control of Your Life— Evaluating Prescription Pharmaceuticals

*February 15, 2019*

The first step in becoming healthy, well, and whole is to retake control over your life in every aspect—physically, mentally, and spiritually. You cannot rely upon the world to have your best interests at heart. Nowhere is this more profound than in the discerning evaluation of every prescription medication that you take. Virtually every medicine is a foreign substance in your body, which may have a beneficial effect, but also likely has numerous unwanted side effects, some of those potentially dangerous, toxic, life-threatening, or addicting. The more medicines that you are on and the longer you are on them significantly increases your risk for drug-interactions, toxicity, and trouble.

It should be no surprise that the pharmaceutical industry is big business, and Western medical doctors are taught to prescribe a drug for whatever ails you, regardless if that is in your overall best health interest or not. Rarely do doctors try to take you off medicines and recommend natural alternatives—and natural alternatives abound—not always as effective as drugs, but certainly with fewer deleterious side effects.

Don't get me wrong! As a part of the health-care system, I certainly know the pros and cons firsthand. My son would not be alive without precision surgical intervention and a liver transplant and life-long anti-rejection medicines to sustain his life. Yet people die every day, commit suicide, or are severely and sometimes permanently damaged by taking prescription medicines. So for the majority of us, we would do better to educate ourselves and ask appropriate questions and investigate viable alternatives.

And I'm here to help you do just that. To start, here are a set of questions that you should investigate or ask your health-care provider concerning every prescription medicine that you take:

1. What is this medicine for and how long must I be on it? Is there a lower dose, less toxic alternative in a different drug, or natural alternative or nutraceutical that might be as effective or help alleviate this problem or condition? Can I at some point safely and slowly taper off this medication?
2. What are the side effects, especially long-term, from taking this medication? Do the potential benefits truly outweigh the risk of negative side effects from taking this medication?
3. Am I, in fact, taking this medication to counteract the negative side effects of another prescription medication that I am already taking? (And herein lies the tragic reality of why some people are on so many drugs. It's an unrelenting and vicious cycle. And that is why doctors are hesitant to change your prescriptions or taper you off them.)
4. How can I reduce the number of medicines that I am taking and how can I safely and slowly taper off some or many of these prescription medications?
5. Finally, if you have a science background, it is helpful to know how the drug actually works—its mechanism of action—its precise chemical action in the body to bring about the desired effect. Many times, believe it or not, this is unknown—the drug has been shown to work in clinical trials and approved by the FDA, but we have no complete understanding as to what its interactions in the body truly are. The mechanism of action is helpful to know if you are contemplating a switch

to a different drug, trying to taper off, or trying to supplement or augment the desired effect with natural nutraceuticals (nutritional supplements).

Start today by asking these pertinent questions to your doctor, pharmacist, and health-care providers. No one should know your body's functioning and needs better than yourself. It is essential, of course, that you do not discontinue or taper off any prescription medication without consulting your doctor first. Most importantly, a plan and methodology would need to be in place as to how you would perform a drug taper and the alternate substitutes or nutrients needed to balance your body's chemistry and physiology appropriately during such taper and the means to measure and monitor your progress through blood tests or other means.

Here are some resources that you can access on your own for a wealth of information. Most of this information requires a strong science background so you may need some assistance in understanding this information and the implications thereof.

#### Smartphone Apps:

1. *Drugs.com* This is an excellent app and has both a layperson and professional option for information access.
2. *WebMD* This also is a good reference.
3. *Medscape* This is very technical and geared for the professional. (You may need to set up login information.)

Remember, every drug has a "generic" chemical name and a *Brand* name. All the above apps are free. There are many other professional pharmaceutical apps (I personally use *Epocrates*) and also many nursing drug-reference apps but most of these require yearly subscriptions.

#### Book References:

1. Solid, safe, conservative information:  
Moyad, Mark, MD, MPH. *The Supplement Handbook: A Trusted Expert's Guide to What Works & What's Worthless for More Than 100 Conditions*. New York: Rodale, 2014.
2. Moderate, with great information on common prescription drugs:  
Mindell, Earl, RPh, PhD. *Prescription Alternatives: Hundreds of Safe, Natural, Prescription-Free Remedies to Restore and Maintain Your Health*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2009.
3. Aggressive, a wealth of nutritional information:  
Balch, Phyllis, CNC. *Prescription for Nutritional Healing, Fifth Edition: A Practical A-to-Z Reference to Drug-Free Remedies Using Vitamins, Minerals, Herbs & Food Supplements*. New York: Avery, 2010.