



PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

# How to Read a Prescription Medication Label

This information will help you read a prescription medication label.

Most prescription medication labels have the same information. But labels often look different depending on which pharmacy you use. Below is an example of a label from Memorial Sloan Kettering (MSK)'s pharmacy (see Figure 1).

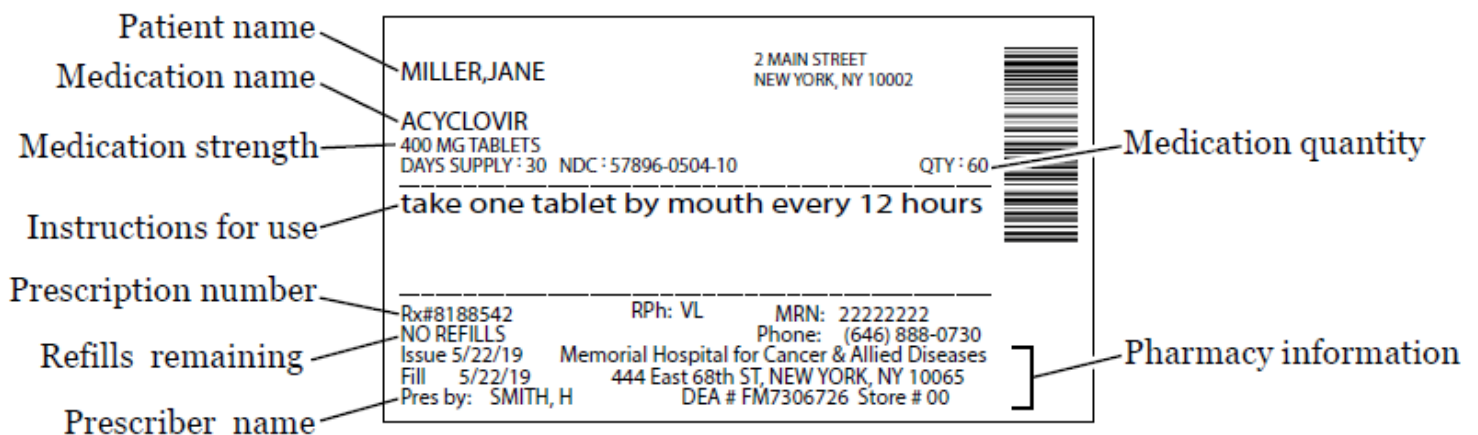


Figure 1.

It's important to know where to find the following information on your prescription medication labels:

- The **patient name**. This is your name or the name of the person the medication is prescribed to.
- The **medication name**. This may be either the generic name or the brand and generic names.
- The **medication strength**. This is how strong each pill or tablet is.
- The **medication quantity**. This is how many pills or tablets are in the container.
- The **refills remaining**. This helps you know how many times you can refill the prescription (get more of the medication). Once you use all the refills, you'll need a new prescription from your healthcare provider to get more of the medication.

- The **instructions for use**. This tells you how to take the medication.
  - If your healthcare provider gives you a home medication list with instructions for taking your medications, follow those instructions instead of the ones on your medication labels. The instructions on the labels might be outdated if your healthcare provider changes your medication dose or schedule more often than you refill your prescriptions.

It's also helpful to know where to find:

- The **prescription number**. You'll need this number when you contact the pharmacy to refill the prescription.
- The **pharmacy information**. This is usually the pharmacy name, address, and phone number. It helps you contact the right pharmacy to refill the medication or if you have questions.
- The **prescriber name**. This is the healthcare provider who prescribed you the medication. It helps you know who to contact if you have questions or need a new prescription for the medication.

If you're not sure how to read the label on one of your medications, ask your healthcare provider or pharmacist for help.

If you have any questions, contact a member of your healthcare team directly. If you're a patient at MSK and you need to reach a provider after 5:00 PM, during the weekend, or on a holiday, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit [www.mskcc.org/pe](http://www.mskcc.org/pe) to search our virtual library.

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