



PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

How to Read a Prescription Medication Label

This information will help you read a prescription medication label.

What to look for on a prescription medication label

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

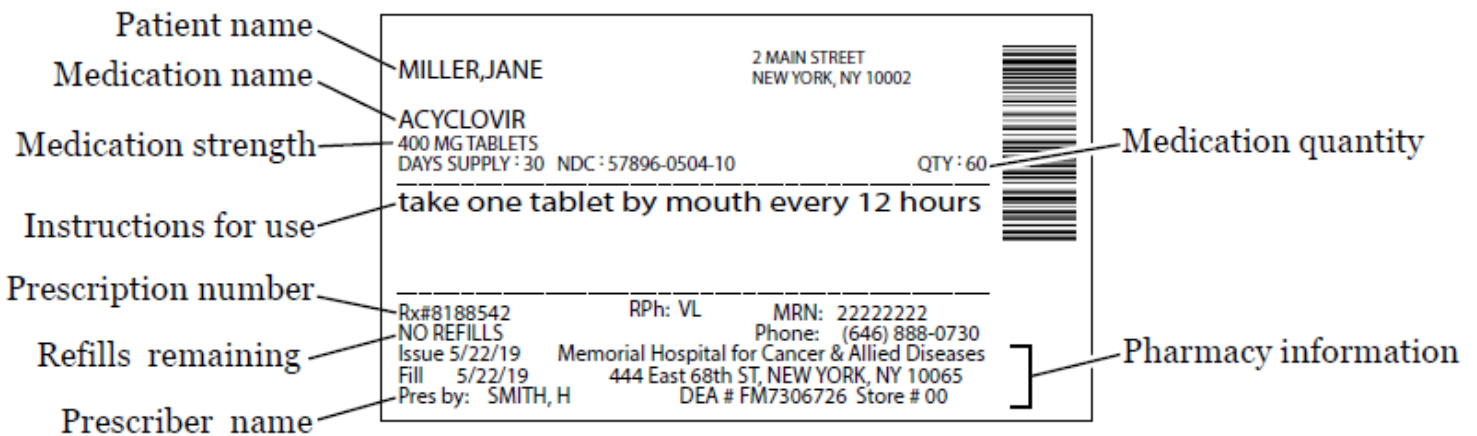


Figure 1. Example of a medication label from MSK’s pharmacy

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

- **Patient name:** This is your name or the name of the person the medication is prescribed to.
- **Medication name:** This may be either the generic name or the brand and generic names.
- **Medication strength:** This is how strong each pill or tablet is.
- **Medication quantity:** This is how many pills or tablets are in the container.
- **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 will need a new

prescription. Ask your healthcare provider to write a new prescription to get more of the medication.

- **Instructions for use.** This tells you how to take the medication.

The instructions on your Home Medication List may be different than the instructions on the bottles. This can happen if your healthcare provider changes your medication dose or schedule more often than you refill your medications.

Always follow the instructions on your Home Medication List, not the instructions on the medication bottles. Your Home Medication List has the most up-to-date information about your medications.

It's also helpful to know where to find:

- **Prescription number.** You'll need this number when you contact the pharmacy to refill the prescription.
- **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.
- **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 your medications, ask your healthcare provider or pharmacist for help.

If you have questions or concerns, contact your healthcare provider. A member of your care team will answer Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Outside those hours, you can leave a message or talk with another MSK provider. There is always a doctor or nurse on call. If you're not sure how to reach your healthcare provider, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

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What could we have explained better?

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