

# INTRODUCTION

In today's health care market, consumers and patients have a wide range of choices in care and treatment that will directly influence your health. Pharmaceutical companies, health plans and discount pharmacy chains fight for your attention on television, radio and in newspapers and magazines. These companies want your valuable business and strive to offer a variety of options and product choices.

**This consumer guide provides an overview for maintaining your health by understanding your prescription drug options.**

Because the choices are numerous, it is important to be an informed consumer; considering your personal health, future needs and access to services. In your role as a consumer, it is easy to prepare, research and document your options before 'investing' in the latest health trend or prescription drug therapy. However, as a patient, it is more critical than ever to work with your doctors and health care professionals to take an active role in understanding your personal health care options. One component of health care that is especially important to maintaining good overall health is prescription drug management. Investigating your prescription drug options with your health care professionals will give you a better understanding of how to:

- Manage chronic conditions
- Reduce the potential for harmful drug interactions
- Save money



The best approach is to create and maintain an open dialog with your professional health care team (your primary physician, specialists, nurses or physician assistants, pharmacists and insurance company). While this may sound like common sense, there are some simple steps you can take to prepare and effectively communicate with your team of health care professionals to expand your options as an informed prescription drug consumer. By taking an active role in your health care and evaluating your prescription drug options, you will have a better understanding of these common questions:

- How do I know which prescriptions are most important to maintain good health?
- How can I save money and manage my health effectively?
- Are generic drugs as effective as brand name?
- What will happen if I skip drug doses?
- How can I reduce the risk of drug interactions?

Whether you take two prescriptions or 10, you have the right and responsibility to know how they will affect you and how you can best maintain your health through your prescriptions.

### Key Resources:

Eldercare Locator: [www.eldercare.gov](http://www.eldercare.gov)  
800.677.1116

The Eldercare Locator is a public service of the U.S. Administration on Aging. It is your first step for finding local agencies, in every U.S. community, that can help older persons and their families access home and community-based services like transportation, meals, home care and caregiver support services.

Consumer Reports Best Buy Drugs™:  
[www.CRBestBuyDrugs.org](http://www.CRBestBuyDrugs.org)

*Consumer Reports Best Buy Drugs™* provides free, unbiased information about the effectiveness, safety and the cost of commonly prescribed medications and provides information on how to talk to physicians about these options. This resource also is useful for family caregivers and professionals.

## ***Your Personal Health Care Team***

You have an entire team of professionals and trusted individuals on your side that can offer you the tools and knowledge to make smart decisions concerning your prescription drugs. They include:

- Your primary care physician
- Your physician assistant or nurse
- Your specialists
- Your lab technicians
- Your local pharmacist
- Your health plan or insurance company

### **Handouts:**

- ▶ Consumer Reports Best Buy Drugs™ Fact Sheet

