



Is Your Medicine In the News?

It's not unusual for the media to pick up on a possible safety problem with a popular medicine. After all, nothing is more precious than our health. So, consumers are always interested to hear or read news about their medicines.

It is not a surprise that a new safety problem may arise with a medicine. When a drug is approved by the Food and Drug Administration, not all is known about its safety. This is because the drug has not been studied in a large enough population to identify rare side effects. When drugs are newly approved, only side effects found in about 1% or more of patients are known.

A Common Sense Approach

Here are some steps to take to help make the right decision about your medicines:

- 1. Don't panic.** Usually a safety debate about a popular drug relates to reports of rare effects.
- 2. Contact your doctor or pharmacist** — personally, by telephone, or by e-mail.
- 3. Have a list of things to ask your doctor or pharmacist.** If you can, send a copy of your questions before your visit.
- 4. Tell your doctor or pharmacist exactly how you take your medicines.** Be sure to say if you are not following directions, taking more than you should, forgetting dosages etc.
- 5. Ask the following questions.**
 - Do you think the benefits of my taking this medicine outweigh the risks?

More questions to ask:

- What risks might I face in taking this medicine?
- Are there alternative medicines to the one I am taking?
- Are there alternatives to some of my medicines, such as lifestyle changes? Should I try these? What do I need to do to be successful with non-drug alternatives?
- If I have to continue to take this medicine, what side effects should I look out for, and when should I call you about them?
- In summary, would you review the best course of action for me? (Take notes, if you need to.)
- Can we set up an appointment in 1-3 months to review what we've decided and see how I am doing?

