



# Be a smart shopper

DRUG ADS ARE LIKE ANY OTHER ADVERTISING  
KNOW HOW TO JUDGE THE PROS AND CONS

Advertising is helpful in informing consumers about products and services, and in the case of drug ads, may help to raise awareness about certain medical conditions. However, drug advertising is like any advertising – it promotes the positives and down-plays the negatives. Here are some questions to ask yourself next time you see a drug ad:

Smart Shopper Questions	Yes	No
<p><b>1. Does the ad tell me what the drug is for?</b> Drug ads aren't required to tell you what the drug is for because if they do, they need to list the side effects as well.</p>		
<p><b>2. Does it say what age group the drug is meant for?</b> Drugs are generally approved for treating certain age groups only.</p>		
<p><b>3. Does it tell me if similar drugs are out there and how this drug compares to them?</b> Drugs are classified according to how they work and what they treat, and there may be similar drugs that have been around longer and are known to be safe and effective.</p>		
<p><b>4. Does it say how long the drug has been around?</b> While new drugs are tested carefully before marketing, their safety and effectiveness are still monitored after they go on sale ("post-marketing" studies). There are often similar drugs that have been around longer and have a proven track record.</p>		
<p><b>5. Does it give the common side effects of the drug?</b> Are these side effects okay with me?</p>		

Remember that medication is often only part of the solution to improving your health. Exercise, diet, stress management, and other components of a healthy lifestyle often help as much or even more than prescription drugs.

For accurate information about drugs, go to reliable sources such as the Drug and Health Encyclopedias on [members.kp.org](http://members.kp.org), other web sites such as <http://medlineplus.gov/>, or ask your healthcare provider or pharmacist.