

**A pocket guide to**

Helping you decide  
whether to take  
a medicine

 **The Academy of  
Medical Sciences**



Royal College of  
General Practitioners

We often hear conflicting reports about how to look after our health. This can be particularly confusing when you're deciding whether to take a new medicine.

---

**We've developed a short list of questions to help you make decisions about medicines that are right for you or your family.**

**You don't have to ask all of our questions.**

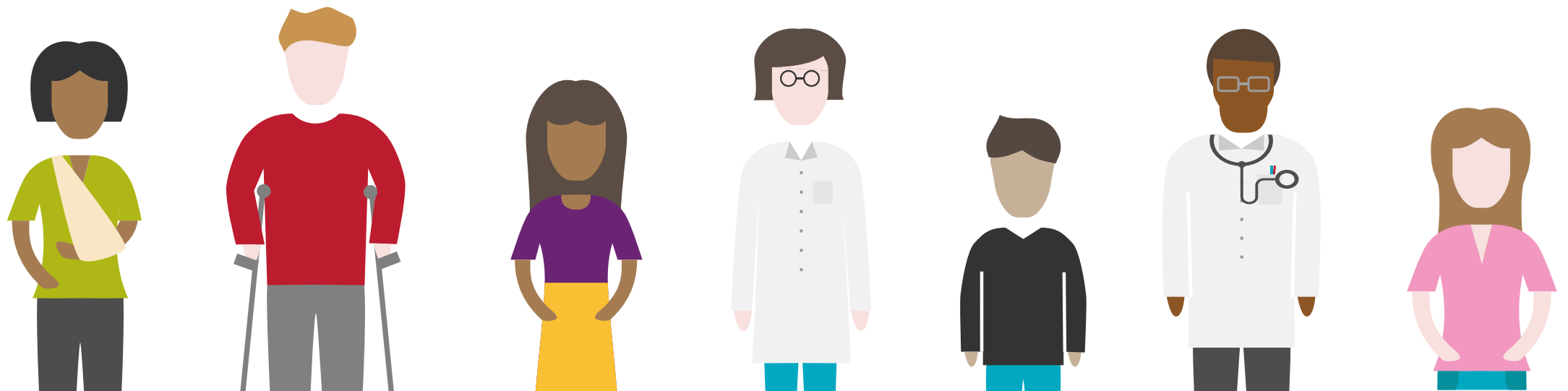
They are designed to enable you and your doctor discuss the evidence behind your treatment options together.

**Before seeing your doctor, ask yourself:**

- What health goals are most important to me?
- What are my expectations of treatment and which of the following questions will help me find out how this medicine can fulfil them?

# 1. Is this medicine right for me?

- What does this medicine do?
- How will this medicine improve my health?
- Are there other medicines that might be more helpful?
- What if I don't take this medicine?
- How certain are you that this treatment will work for me?



## 2. What are the potential benefits and risks of this medicine?

- What are the potential benefits of this medicine?
- What are the potential risks of this medicine?
- Are the potential benefits or potential risks higher for me?
- Is this a tried and tested medicine?



# 3. How will this medicine make me feel?

- How will this medicine affect my day-to-day life?
- Is this medicine going to improve the symptoms that concern me?
- What are the most common side effects? How severe are they? Are there likely to be any long-term side effects?
- Are there any issues with taking this medicine that my carer and/or family should be aware of?



# 4. How should I take this medicine?

- How should I take this medicine (e.g. how many times a day, with or without food, any food or drink to be avoided)?
- Can I take this medicine with my other medication?
- How long do I need to take this medicine for?
- When will it begin to have an effect?



**This pocket guide has been produced by the Academy of Medical Sciences, whose mission is to improve health through research. It is endorsed by the Royal College of General Practitioners, the professional membership body for family doctors in the UK.**

For further information on the Academy and this project, visit: [www.acmedsci.ac.uk/evidence](http://www.acmedsci.ac.uk/evidence)

