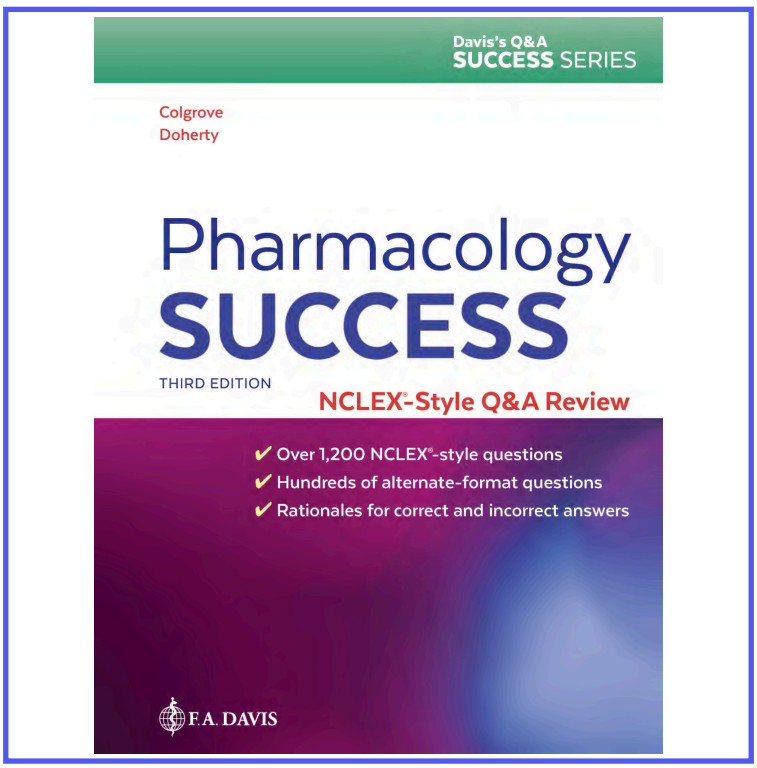


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1 Basic Concepts in Medication Administration

The nurse should never put a medication in any client's orifice, man-made or natural, if the nurse does not know what the medication is, how it acts in the body, and what the safe administration guidelines for that medication are.

—Ray A. Hargrove-Huttel

PHARMACOLOGY TEST-TAKING HINTS

The test taker must know medications, and memorization is part of administering medications safely. This chapter contains some tips to assist the test taker in learning about medications. These tips apply to all the questions in this book.

First, learn the specific classification of a medication, including the actions, side effects, and adverse effects. Also, learn how to safely administer a medication in the classification. Generally speaking, medications in a classification share characteristics. However, be sure not to be too broad in the classification. For example, do not combine all medications administered for hypertension in the same category. Angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitors, beta blockers, and calcium channel blockers do not work in the same manner and are not in the same classification, even though they may all be used to treat hypertension. Similarly, medications for diabetes mellitus and diuretics fall into several classification groups, and the facts about each specific classification must be learned. This knowledge will assist the nurse in administering medications, as medications in a specific class will have similar safety requirements and similar effects/side effects. For example, ALL beta blocker medications require the nurse to monitor the blood pressure and apical pulse (AP) prior to administering the medication.

The biggest change for a nursing student regarding learning to administer medications and being able to pass the RN-NCLEX is that the RN-NCLEX examination no longer provides the test taker with the classification or the trade name of the medication. This requires the test taker to recognize the medication and its effects and side effects by memorization of the generic name. Because of this change, all medications in the stems of the questions will list only the generic names. The classification of the medication and a trade name will be provided in the answers section so the test taker will become familiar with several ways to recognize the medications. The exception to this will be when the test taker is required to use a medication administration record (MAR). In some clinical facilities, MARs contain both the generic names and trade names of the medications, so some MARs will contain both in this book.

When administering medications for a group of clients, the test taker must realize that time is a realistic issue. It is not feasible for the nurse to look up 50 to 60 medications and administer them all within the dosing time frame, so it is imperative that the nurse learn about the most common medications.

One tip for learning about medications is for the test taker to complete handmade drug cards. This is better than buying ready-made cards because in completing the drug cards the test taker uses more than one method of learning—reading, deciding which information to put on the card, and writing the pertinent information on the card. All of this assists the test taker in memorizing the information.