




Learning Centre

## Pharmacology Study Tips

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Here are some tips to help you study pharmacology, one of the more challenging courses in any nursing program. You can try these study tips and see if they improve your learning. However, also use any other learning strategies that work best for you based on your learning style and approaches you have used in the past.

- 1. Know your basic anatomy and physiology.** Knowing how the human body works helps you understand how a drug affects the body. For example, if you understand what hypertension is and its effect on the body, you can anticipate how anti-hypertensives affect the body, potential nursing considerations, assessments and patient education. The body is complex, so it's important to review your anatomy and physiology. 
- 2. Take good notes.** When doing the course readings for homework, as well as in class during lectures, always actively take notes. Taking good notes will help you study for exams because creating the notes itself helps you learn the material. These become study material that you can use to prepare for the exam instead of having to re-open the textbook to study. Plus, active note-taking while studying helps you prepare for class, where you will be able to take even better notes during the lecture because you come to class prepared.
- 3. Separate drugs into classes.** Drugs of the same class usually have similar side effects, teaching points, etc. Instead of memorizing hundreds of drugs, organize them into categories and learn how to remember which drug fits into which group. For example, Beta Blockers end in "lol," which means metoprolol and propranolol must be beta-blockers and most likely have similar effects.
- 4. Make study sheets.** These are a great way to compile onto one set of sheets all the information you've been learning from different resources. Plus, making study sheets is an active way to study and take in the information in a deeper way. You should combine lecture notes and textbook resources so that you have one resource to study when you prepare for exams. Drawing pictures and color coding can especially help visual learners.



- 5. Create Tables.** Creating a table for drug classes can highlight the difference between drugs within the same class and also the commonalities within one drug class (for example, almost all antibiotics will cause nausea). See example of an incomplete table below for antihypertensive medications:

Drug Name/Class	ACE inhibitors	ARBS	Ca++ channel blockers	Diuretics
Mechanism of action				
Therapeutic Effect				
Nursing Assessments				
Nursing Diagnosis				
Nursing Evaluation				
Adverse Effects				

- 6. Find unique ways to remember the information.** You can do this through relating topics to concepts that are meaningful to you:

- Mnemonics: make your own or find pre-existing ones
- Connect the info: use onomatopoeia, similar sounding words, acronyms, create a story, etc.
- Example: THROMBUS is TIED DOWN and an EMBOLUS ESCAPES; beta-blockers end in "lol"

- 7. Study with a group.** Actively talking about what you're studying is a great way to consolidate your learning. A small group of friends are perfect to study with--you can bounce ideas off of each other and learn from one another in a fun, less boring way. However, try to stick to smaller groups because the learning benefit is in actively talking out your learning. Larger groups can make it easy to stay silent and to get distracted.

- 8. Use your resources:**

- **Textbook:** Use the textbook regularly and strategically as the place to look up specific details and to clarify or read up on a concept you're not familiar with. The textbook is a great research tool for looking up gaps in your knowledge about a specific drug or group of drugs.
- **Evolve or Textbook Questions from chapter:** Many textbooks have online questions available through the Evolve/Elsevier website that can be useful when studying for exams. Further, most textbooks have questions at the back of the chapter which can also be used to review.
- **ATI:** We pay for it every semester and it has great resources to help prepare for exams; the ATI text books are short and to the point, have



great diagrams, and highlight the need to know information of a given topic. The quizzes can be daunting and challenging because they are meant for a higher level; however, they can really help test your knowledge and facilitate your learning.

- **Tutoring center:** Take advantage of the DC Learning Centre on campus. The tutors are there to help you succeed!
- **YouTube:** Crash Course, Khan Academy, Osmosis.org, Armando Hasudangan, and so many more are there to help you!
- **NCLEX study apps or guides** - There are so many out there!



## 9. Ask if you don't understand ☺

### References

Ellis, J. (2013, August). *Top 10 Tips for Pharmacology Nursing Students*. Retrieved from <http://www.chamberlain.edu/blog/top-10-tips-for-pharmacology-nursing-courses>

Student Nurse Jennifer (2017, June). *8 Study Tips for Pathophysiology*. Retrieved from: <https://studentnursejennifer.wordpress.com/2017/06/30/8-study-tips-for-pathophysiology/>