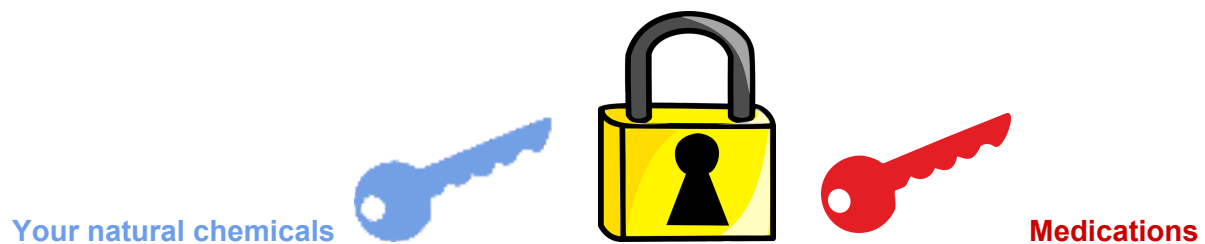


Boosting your natural drug cabinet



Thinking about medication, it is important to remember *why* and *how* medicines work. Let's explain this using a 'lock and key' example.

The chemicals in medications can only affect us if our bodies already have a way of accepting them into our system. In our bodies we have receptors. Receptors are like padlocks. Only if the right chemicals are present will they fit into the receptors, and then either lock or unlock the padlock. Both locking and unlocking the padlock creates a chemical reaction to produce a response in the body. The chemicals are like keys and the receptors are like the padlocks.

Our bodies were born with receptors (padlocks) ready for receiving chemicals (keys) to produce a response. In other words, we have chemicals (**keys**) already in our bodies locking and unlocking receptors (padlocks) all the time.

Medicines are designed to mimic our natural chemicals. This is so they can also try to lock or unlock the receptors (padlocks) in our body.

The tricky part is that **medicine** may be blunter or more like a multi-tools than our **own natural chemicals**. So they may fit into the right locks, BUT they may ALSO fit into other locks, causing other reactions on top of the one we want. These are the unwanted side effects.

Another unwanted effect of taking medication is that over time our bodies tend to decrease or stop making our natural chemicals (keys). So where the medication was a top up of our natural chemicals to begin with, we need more and more of the medication over time as we produce less and less of our natural chemicals. Alongside this, the unwanted side effects tend to increase over time.

So where possible, boosting our body's own **natural chemicals** is worth looking into!

Some of the natural chemicals released by practicing strategies discussed during this programme include:

Strategies taught in the programme	Natural chemicals (keys) released in our body
Exercise	Endorphins (the body's own opiates), dopamine (rewards), serotonin (feel good)
Breathing, relaxation, mindfulness	Melatonin (sleepy), serotonin (feel good), GABA (calms)
Connecting – whānau, pets, kindness to self	Oxytocin (bonding, loving), serotonin (feel good)