

TABLE 1.2 Drug Categories

Category	Main Action	Examples
<b>Curative</b>	Cures or treats a problem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Penicillin to treat strep throat</li> </ul>
<b>Prophylactic</b>	Prevents a problem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cefazolin (Ancef, Kefzol) to prevent infections from surgery</li> <li>• Vaccine to prevent measles, mumps, and rubella</li> </ul>
<b>Diagnostic</b>	Helps diagnose a disease or condition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diatrizoate meglumine and diatrizoate sodium (Gastrografin)</li> <li>• Barium sulfate (Gastrografin and Barium sulfate are used for computed tomography scans)</li> </ul>
<b>Palliative</b>	Treats symptoms to make the patient more comfortable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Morphine to relieve the pain of cancer</li> <li>• Oxygen to make breathing more comfortable</li> </ul>
<b>Replacement</b>	Replaces a missing substance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Levothyroxine</li> <li>• Natural thyroid to treat hypothyroidism</li> </ul>
<b>Destructive</b>	Destroys tumors and/or microbes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carbimazole to inhibit the production of thyroid hormone to treat hyperthyroidism</li> </ul>

- **Diagnostic.** Some drugs help diagnose a disease, such as barium that patients swallow to help highlight digestive problems on a radiograph.
- **Palliative.** Other drugs, such as pain relievers, do not cure disease, but they make patients more comfortable.
- **Replacement.** These drugs “replace” missing substances. Levothyroxine sodium (Synthroid), for example, is a drug that replaces a missing thyroid hormone.
- **Destructive.** Some medications destroy tumors and microbes. **Antineoplastic** (anticancer) drugs are an example of destructive, toxic drugs.

Medications are used for various reasons during a patient’s life span. As a health-care provider, you must know how the different categories of drugs may affect a patient. Understanding this information will help you provide effective counseling, patient care, and safe administration of drugs depending on your role and scope of practice.



### CRITICAL THINKING

Identify the following drugs as curative, prophylactic, diagnostic, palliative, replacement, or destructive.

- Synthroid
- Diuretic (“water pill”)
- Flu vaccine
- Radiopaque dye
- Fever reducer
- Anticancer drug