Learning Objectives

- Cite the classifications and actions of gastrointestinal system drugs
- Give examples of when, how, and to whom gastrointestinal system drugs may be administered
- Identify the side effects and special considerations associated with gastrointestinal system drug therapy
- Identify considerations and implications of using gastrointestinal system medications across the lifespan
- Apply evidence-based concepts when using the nursing process
- Identify indications and adverse/side effects associated with the use of herbal supplements
- Identify and interpret related laboratory tests

Gastrointestinal complaints are a commonplace occurrence. How many times have you heard someone complaining of an upset stomach, heartburn, nausea, constipation, or diarrhea? Occasionally, these ailments will go away on their own…but if they do not, there are a variety of medications that can be used to treat the disease or symptom. Treatment can involve both the use of prescription and nonprescription drug therapy, in addition to nonpharmacological interventions. In this chapter, you will learn about medications used to treat common disorders within the gastrointestinal system.

Prior to the examination of specific medication classes, it is important to have a clear understanding of the various components that make up the gastrointestinal system. Use the following “Basics” section to review selected anatomy and physiology of the gastrointestinal system.