



- Medication adherence means taking medications the way they are prescribed and following the plan developed by your health care team.
- Adherence is important for medications to work correctly.
- Not being adherent with your medications could result in a worsening of your medical condition, a decrease in your quality of life, and a need to go to the hospital or clinic more often.^{1,2}
- There are many tools and resources available to help with medication adherence.
- Communication is key. Speak with your doctor or pharmacist about any questions or concerns about your medications.

Caroline Barnard, PharmD, February 2019

Being adherent means following directions or sticking to a plan. It is as simple as refilling your prescriptions on time or following the directions on your prescription bottle. If you take your medications the way that your doctor or pharmacist explained, then you are being adherent. Medication adherence is important to achieve your goals of treatment and ensure that medications work correctly. Not taking medications how they are prescribed could cause you to get sicker, decrease your quality of life, and increase your visits to the clinic or hospital.^{1,2}

It can be hard to remember to take your medications if you have several different prescriptions or take them at several times during the day. The best way to remember something is to make it a part of your daily routine and do it over and over. There are several tips and tricks that may help you take your medications properly.

Take medicine at the same time each day. Set an alarm on your phone or watch.

Taking medication at the same time each day is important for them to work correctly. If you take several medications at different times during the day, setting an alarm on your watch or cell phone is a great way to remind yourself when each dose is due.

Pair medications with something you do every day

If you aren't a fan of technology, pair your medications with something you do every day. For example, if you drink coffee every morning, put your medication bottle next to the coffee pot. This will remind you to take your medication while the coffee is brewing.

Put medications in a weekly pill box

If carrying around several different prescription bottles is a hassle, consider getting a weekly pill box or medication planner to keep everything together.

Enroll in a pharmacy automatic refill program

Forgetting to refill prescriptions may cause you to go several days without medication. If you often forget refills, ask your pharmacy if they have an automatic refill program.

Have prescriptions mailed to your home

You could consider using a mail order service so that your prescriptions are sent right to your front door.

Take a medication list to each doctor visit

It is a good idea for anyone taking prescription medications to have a medication list. Make a list with the name and strength of your medication, the reason why you take it, how much you take, and when you take it. Leave a blank space to write down any questions or concerns to ask next time you see your doctor. Keep this list up to date and take it with you to each doctor visit.

Know your medications

Questions to ask before starting a new medication:

1. Why do I need this medication?
2. How should I take this medicine?
3. What are some possible side effects of this medication?
4. What do I do if I miss a dose of this medicine?
5. What happens if I don't feel better?

Speak with your doctor or pharmacist about any questions or concerns you have about your medications and how you take them.

Remember, communication is key. Speak with your doctor or pharmacist about issues that are preventing you from being able to take your medications the way they are prescribed.

Don't forget that you are the most important member of your health care team. It is your health after all! Work with your doctor or pharmacist to develop a medication plan that fits best into your daily life.

Reasons for Nonadherence	Possible Solutions
Side effects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk with your doctor or pharmacist • Learn about the side effects <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Some side effects go away with time - Some side effects can be treated with additional medications
Denial, embarrassment or poor understanding of mental illness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk with a health care provider • Ask for more information to learn more about the illness • Remember you are not alone
Difficulty remembering to take medications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get a pill box • Set an alarm to remember • Pair medications with something you do every day • Establish a routine • Ask your doctor if your medication is available in a long-acting or once a day formulation
Don't feel the medication is working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most medications for mental illness take about 4-6 weeks to work • Be patient - these medications take time • Talk with your doctor if you feel your medication is not working
Treatment success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some medications require long-term treatment • Stopping your medication could cause your symptoms to return • Always talk with your doctor before stopping any medications • Having no symptoms can mean your medication is working
Cost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask your doctor or pharmacist if there is a generic formulation or a similar medication that costs less • Ask your doctor or pharmacist about patient assistance programs



Go online to find more information about adherence and to view the references for this toolkit.

cpnp.org/390123

Important Disclosure: This information is being provided as a community outreach effort of the College of Psychiatric and Neurologic Pharmacists. This information is for educational and informational purposes only and is not medical advice. This information contains a summary of important points and is not an exhaustive review of information about the topic. Always seek the advice of a physician or other qualified medical professional with any questions you may have regarding medications or medical conditions. Never delay seeking professional medical advice or disregard medical professional advice as a result of any information provided herein. The College of Psychiatric and Neurologic Pharmacists disclaims any and all liability alleged as a result of the information provided herein.