

Health Care Tips

Medication adherence

This handout will help you learn about medication adherence and tips to improve your own medication adherence.

What is medication adherence?¹

Medication adherence is how well you follow your doctor’s advice for taking your medications. When you take medications at the exact doses and times that match your doctor’s instructions, you have high medication adherence. High medication adherence helps you control your conditions and avoid related health problems. Here is an example of a chart you can fill out to track your medication adherence.^{2,3} You can also describe or draw a picture of each medication under the “Medication Name” column. The first two rows are examples.

Your name:		Allergy and reactions:			
Doctor contact:		Pharmacy contact:			
Medication name and dose	Used for	Instructions	Special Instructions	Start date	Refill date
Simvastatin 20 mg oval brown tablet	Cholesterol	Take one tablet by mouth at bedtime.	Watch for muscle aches	1/1/2018	1/31/2018
Hydrochlorothiazide (HCTZ) 25 mg round peach tablet	High blood pressure	Take one tablet by mouth once every morning.	Wear sunscreen	1/1/2018	1/31/2018

(continued)

How is your medication adherence?³⁻⁵

Answer the questions below to see how you're doing. If you check "Yes" to any of these questions, read on for tips on how to keep your medication adherence high.

Do you ever stop taking medications or skip doses because you:

Question	Your Answer (check one)	If You Checked "Yes"
Have concerns about side effects?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Talk with your pharmacist or doctor about your side effects and ways to ease or stop them.
Don't think the medication works?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	You may not always notice the change your medication has on you. You may need time or tests to see how well the medication works. Talk to your pharmacist or doctor about goals for your medications.
Feel fine when you're not taking your medication?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	When you stop a medication too early or skip doses, you may miss out on long-term benefits. Ask your pharmacist or doctor: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How long you need to take your medication?• What benefits will I have by taking my medication in the long term?
Can't afford your medication(s)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Talk to your pharmacist or doctor about lower-cost options. For example, you may: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Switch to generic medications, if possible. Generic medications work as well as the brand and usually cost less• Switch to another medication in the same or related drug class• Ask if there are coupons or discounts for the medication(s) you take
Feel that you have too many medications or doses to take?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	It can be hard to keep track of the number of medications we take every day. There may be long-acting or combination medications that can make your regimen easier. Talk to your pharmacist or doctor to see if these options are right for you.

Question	Your Answer (check one)	If You Checked "Yes"
<p>Forget to take your medication(s)?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>	<p>With our busy lives, it's easy to miss a dose or forget to take our medications. Here are some tips to help you remember to take your medications on time:</p> <p>Stay organized and plan ahead:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make a list of your medications. Include their names, doses and any instructions • Use a pillbox to organize your pills • For changes in schedule such as weekend outings, be prepared and bring your medications with you <p>Create a routine:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take your medications at the same time each day so it becomes a routine • Keep your medications in plain sight to help you remember to take them • Fit your medication-taking into your routine. For instance, if you take medications at bedtime, place these medications on your nightstand. <p>Set up reminders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post reminders where they are most visible, such as a bathroom mirror or refrigerator door • Set an alarm on your clock or cell phone • Sign up for a reminder service • Team with family or friends to remind each other to take medications <p>Make it easier to refill your medications:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk to your pharmacist about refilling all your medications on the same day, if possible • Get a 90-day supply of the long-term medications you take • Sign up for medication home delivery

(continued)

Where can I learn more?⁴

Below are resources to help you reduce your medication costs:

National Council on Aging

Website: benefitscheckup.org

NeedyMeds

Website: needymeds.org

Partnership for Prescription Assistance

Website: pparx.org

RxAssist

Website: rxassist.org

TogetherRx Access

Website: togetherrxaccess.com

RxHope

Website: rxhope.com

Below are resources to help you remember to take your medications:

MyMedSchedule

Website: mymedschedule.com

MyMeds

Website: my-meds.com

OptumRx[®]: My Medication Reminders[™]

Website: optumrx.com

Script Your Future

Website: scriptyourfuture.org

¹ Adherence to Long-Term Therapies: Evidence for Action. WHO. Available at: who.int/chp/knowledge/publications/adherence_report/en/. Accessed November 3, 2017.

² How to Create a Pill Card. AHRQ. Available at: ahrq.gov/patients-consumers/diagnosis-treatment/treatments/pillcard/index.html. Accessed November 3, 2017.

³ Medication Adherence - Taking Your Meds as Directed. AHA page. Available at: heart.org/HEARTORG/Conditions/More/ConsumerHealthCare/Medication-Adherence---Taking-Your-Meds-as-Directed_UCM_453329_Article.jsp#.VkzPu03JDIU. November 3, 2017.

⁴ Medication Adherence Clinical Reference. ACPM. Available at: acpm.org/?MedAdherTT_ClinRef. Accessed November 3, 2017.

⁵ Following an HIV Regimen: Steps to Take Before and After Starting HIV Medicines. AIDSinfo page. Available at: aidsinfo.nih.gov/education-materials/fact-sheets/21/55/following-an-hivregimen---steps-to-take-before-and-after-starting-hiv-medicines. Accessed November 3, 2017.

The information in this educational tool does not substitute for the medical advice, diagnosis or treatment of your physician. Always seek the help of your physician or qualified health provider for any questions you may have regarding your medical condition.

All Optum trademarks and logos are owned by Optum, Inc. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners. © 2017 Optum, Inc. All rights reserved.