

Why You Need to Take Your Medications as Prescribed or Instructed

8 Tips to Sticking to Your Medication Routine

Sticking to your medication routine (or medication adherence) means taking your medications as prescribed – the right dose, at the right time, in the right way and frequency. Why is doing these things important? Simply put, not taking your medicine as prescribed by a doctor or instructed by a pharmacist could lead to your disease getting worse, hospitalization, even death.

The High Cost of Not Taking Your Medicines as Prescribed

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that non-adherence causes 30 to 50 percent of chronic disease treatment failures and 125,000 deaths per year in this country. Twenty five to 50 percent of patients being treated with statins (cholesterol lowering medications) who stop their therapy within one year have up to a 25 percent increased risk for dying.

Statistically speaking: The problem of not taking medicine as prescribed

- 20 to 30 percent of new prescriptions are never filled at the pharmacy.
- Medication is not taken as prescribed 50 percent of the time.
- For patients prescribed medications for chronic diseases, after six months, the majority take less medication than prescribed or stop the medication altogether.
- Only 51 percent of patients taking medications for high blood pressure continue taking their medication during their long-term treatment.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

Why Some Don't Take Medications as Prescribed

Many patients do not follow health-care provider instructions on how to take medications for various reasons. Such as, not understanding the directions, forgetfulness, multiple medications with different regimens, unpleasant side effects or the medication doesn't seem to be working. Cost can also be a factor causing medication non-adherence -- patients can't afford to fill their prescriptions or decide to take less than the prescribed dose to make the prescription last longer. "However, to help you get the best results from your medications taking your medicine as instructed is very important," says Kimberly DeFronzo, R.Ph., M.S., M.B.A., a Consumer Safety Officer in FDA's Center for Drug Evaluation and Research.

Tips to Help You Take Your Medicine

Taking your medicine as prescribed or medication adherence is important for controlling chronic conditions, treating temporary conditions, and overall long-term health and well-being. A personal

connection with your health-care provider or pharmacist is an important part of medication adherence. “Because your pharmacist is an expert in medications, they can help suggest how best to take your medications,” says DeFronzo. However, you play the most important part by taking all of your medications as directed.

Here are 8 tips that may help:

- Take your medication at the same time every day.
- Tie taking your medications with a daily routine like brushing your teeth or getting ready for bed. Before choosing mealtime for your routine, check if your medication should be taken on a full or empty stomach.
- Keep a “medicine calendar” with your pill bottles and note each time you take a dose.
- Use a pill container. Some types have sections for multiple doses at different times, such as morning, lunch, evening, and night.
- When using a pill container, refill it at the same time each week. For example, every Sunday morning after breakfast.
- Purchase timer caps for your pill bottles and set them to go off when your next dose is due. Some pill boxes also have timer functions.
- When travelling, be certain to bring enough of your medication, plus a few days extra, in case your return is delayed.
- If you’re flying, keep your medication in your carry-on bag to avoid lost luggage. Temperatures inside the cargo hold could damage your medication.



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