

MEDICATION ADHERENCE

A Guide for Healthcare Professionals



DID YOU KNOW?

- **40%** of patients with chronic kidney disease don't take their medications as prescribed.¹
- **30%** of patients report cost-related medication non-adherence.²
- **25%** of hospitalizations in the United States each year are due to poor medication adherence.³

COMMON REASONS for medication non-adherence:

- Lack of understanding
- Fear of side effects
- Concern a medication is ineffective
- Forgetfulness and/or busy schedule
- Complicated medication regimens
- Frequent trips or lack of transportation to a pharmacy
- Cost and medication access

The good news: **YOU CAN HELP!**

Tip #1: Simplify the process.

- Prescribe a 90-day supply (or 100-day supply for some Medicare beneficiaries) of chronic medications.
- Use generic medications when available.
- Avoid polypharmacy and de-prescribe when possible.
- Simplify medication regimens and reduce pill burden (e.g., choose once daily medications and/or combination medication products).
- Provide an up-to-date medication list to patients.

Tip #2: Prioritize medication review and education.

- Teach staff to effectively review medications and supplements and ask about medication adherence at each patient visit.
- Educate on medication indications, dosing, frequency, timing, adverse effects, expected health outcomes, and the importance of medication adherence.
- Address concerns related to efficacy and side effects.

Tip #3: Identify barriers and share these tips with your patients.

BARRIER	POTENTIAL SOLUTION
Forgetfulness and/or busy schedule 	- Set up automatic refills or pharmacy refill reminders. - Set medication time reminders using phone alarms or free phone apps (e.g., Round Health, Medisafe). - Carry medications when leaving home. - Use a pillbox to serve as a physical reminder to take medications and check whether they have been taken.
Complicated medication regimens 	- Create medication schedules or charts that specify instructions. - Use a weekly pillbox or digital medication dispenser. - Ask for blister packs or pill packs. Select pharmacies may provide this service for a fee.
Frequent trips or lack of transportation to a pharmacy 	- Ask for medication synchronization. Pharmacies can assist with coordinating refills to reduce trips to the pharmacy. - Use a mail delivery pharmacy or local pharmacy delivery.
Cost and medication access 	- Request insurance-preferred formulary medications. - Ask for generic medications. Walmart and other select retail pharmacies may offer generic medications for \$4 per month. - Use prescription savings cards, coupons, or prescription samples. - Apply for Patient Assistance Programs (e.g., www.needymeds.com). - Order medications from low-cost direct-to-consumer pharmacies, such as: - Cost Plus Drugs (www.costplusdrugs.com) - DiRx Health (www.dirxhealth.com) - Amazon Pharmacy RxPass (www.pharmacy.amazon.com) - Talk to your doctor about alternative medications during drug shortages. Shortage information is available on the FDA website (www.fda.gov/drugs/drug-safety-and-availability/drug-shortages). - Find health and community services available in your zip code (e.g., www.findhelp.org).

References

¹ Tesfaye W, Parrish N, Sud K, Grandinetti A, Castolino R. Medication Adherence Among Patients with Kidney Disease: An Umbrella Review. *Advances in Kidney Disease and Health*. 2024;31(1):68-83.

² Sparks G, Kirzinger A, Montero A, Valdes I, Hamel L. Public Opinion on Prescription Drugs and their Prices. KFF. October 4, 2024.

³ Kim J, Combs K, Downs J, Tillman F. Medication Adherence: The Elephant in the Room. *US Pharm*. 2018;43(1):30-34.