

Medication Compliance



What Is Medication Compliance?

Medication compliance refers to how well a patient follows medical advice about his or her medication therapy. Patients who take their medications correctly as instructed by their health care provider are compliant, while those patients who take their medications incorrectly, or not at all, are noncompliant.

Medication compliance is one of the most important parts of medication therapy that is often overlooked. Once the medication is prescribed the health care provider may forget to ask how the patient is taking the medication, and the patient may not talk about how s/he is feeling. A medication is most effective in treating a patient's condition if it is taken as prescribed by the health care provider. There can be negative effects from being noncompliant with prescribed medications. Medication compliance should always be discussed with your health care provider as part of your treatment.

Studies show that not many patients practice medication compliance. It is estimated that most patients do not take their medications 50 percent of the time as prescribed by their health care provider.^{1,2}

What Are The Consequences Of Being Noncompliant With Medication Therapy?

It depends on the medical condition being treated. Some medications are used to treat symptoms and some are used to prevent more serious medical events. Noncompliance is the main reason medical therapy fails and disease worsens.³ It may also result in costly preventable hospital admissions and loss of productivity due to illness.³ The bottom line is that if you don't take your medications or don't take them as prescribed, they cannot do their job and your condition may not improve and may actually worsen.

Take this quiz to see if you're compliant with your medication therapy.

Medication Compliance Quiz

Question	Answer (Yes or No)
Have you ever neglected to fill an initial prescription?	
Have you ever neglected to refill a prescription that your health care provider wanted you to take?	
Have you ever forgotten to take—or neglected to take—your medication(s) as prescribed?	
Do you neglect to take your medication(s) on the time schedule ordered by your health care provider?	

Have you ever stopped, skipped, or delayed taking a medication to save it for future use (eg, in case the condition it is used to treat reoccurs)?	
Have you ever stopped taking your medication(s) without telling your health care provider?	
When you feel better, do you sometimes stop or skip doses of your medication(s)?	
Have you ever taken someone else's medication(s)?	

If you answered “yes” to any of the questions above, you are probably not taking your medication(s) correctly, which may affect your health.

How Can I Be More Compliant With My Medication Therapy?

Here are some tips on how you can improve your medication compliance.

- The first step is having the correct information.
 - Find out the generic and brand names of your medication(s)
 - Find out why you are taking the medication and how it is supposed to help you
 - Ask how often and when during the day you are to take the medication(s), what the duration of the treatment is, and what to do if you feel better
 - Ask if there are any foods, drinks, or other medications or activities you should avoid while taking your medication(s)
 - Find out about the possible side effects and what to do if they occur
 - Ask your health care provider or pharmacist about your medication(s) and where you might be able to learn more about them
- Incorporate taking medications into your daily routine. For example, you can take certain medications after brushing your teeth every day.
- If you are taking a lot of medications, talk to your health care provider about simplifying your medication schedule.
- If you are experiencing bothersome side effects, notify your health care provider immediately so that s/he can evaluate the situation to see if there are other options or things you can do to minimize those side effects.
- If you have additional questions or concerns, talk with your health care provider or pharmacist.

Being compliant does not mean just taking the medication. For medications to do their job properly, you need to take the medications at the right doses, time, and for the proper length of therapy. Take charge of your health and take your medication(s) as prescribed by your health care provider.

References:

1. Bayliss EA, Park MK, Westfall JM, Zamorski MA. Clinical inquiries. How can I improve patient adherence to prescribed medication? *J Fam Pract.* 2001;50(4):303-304.
2. Wertheimer AI, Santella TM. Medication compliance research: still so far to go. *J Appl Res Clin Exp Ther.* 2003;3(3):254-261.
3. Thrall G, Lip GYH, Lane D. Compliance with pharmacological therapy in hypertension: can we do better, and how? *J Hum Hypertens.* 2004;18(9):595-597.