



Medication Adherence is Important to Your Health

Betty Chaffee/ February 10, 2024/ [Medication adherence](#), [Medication Management](#), [Self management](#), [Taking medicine as prescribed](#)/ [0 comments](#)

This is the third post in our 2024 series on Medication Management. Medication Management includes all the things you and your healthcare team do to help you get the best health outcomes from your medications. These first posts are all about your role in the process. Here, we'll focus on "medication adherence" -- taking medications consistently and correctly. It's an important part of medication management, since [research](#) shows that nearly half of us don't take our medications as they were prescribed.

Why is adherence to medications so hard?

Meds can be hard to take consistently or correctly for lots of reasons. It's not just forgetfulness. Here are a few:

- ***Misunderstanding doctors' instructions*** -- Once a day, or twice a day? As needed or regularly scheduled? When office visits are rushed, information can get lost.
- ***Affordability*** -- Medications may not be covered by insurance, or covered with an unaffordable co-pay.
- ***Lack of instruction on the use of devices*** -- Tablets are usually easy to take. But what about inhalers, injectables, patches, creams, films, and other devices?
- ***Choosing to stop taking a med*** -- Worry about side effects or efficacy, having too many meds to take, or just not wanting to take medicine.

How does non-adherence to medications affect health?

Research clearly shows that adherence to certain types of medications can [predict health outcomes](#). Medications for blood pressure, asthma, COPD, depression, high cholesterol, and blood clots are some of the most important. When your chronic health problems are under control you stay healthier. And staying healthier is likely to keep your overall healthcare costs down. Taking medications as prescribed at least 80% of the time is linked to better health and decreased costs, both for you and for the health system overall.

But what do you do if you can't, or choose not to, take your meds as directed? Or aren't sure how to use a device correctly? It's nothing to be embarrassed about. Whatever your reasons, they're your reasons. And this is where the rest of your healthcare team needs to help you. We all need to work together to find the best way forward -- the best way to make sure you stay as healthy as possible.

How can you help your healthcare team?

The best thing you can do is be open with your healthcare providers. If you can't afford a medication, can't figure out how to remember it consistently, or simply don't want to take it, let them know. Then be willing to listen to their concerns, and open to finding the best alternative.

How can your healthcare team help you?

Your healthcare team needs to listen and be open with you, too. Hearing your concerns, your team needs to work with you to find a solution that works for you and still provides you with a path to health. And remember that it's not just your doctor -- your pharmacist can help, too.



Maybe the only thing keeping you from taking your meds consistently is forgetfulness. As discussed in the [first of these posts](#), your pharmacist can help you find a medication organizer or synchronize your refills. Or you can look for a [mobile app](#) that will remind you to take them.



It's on your healthcare team to make sure [you've been taught](#) how to use devices like inhalers and injectables. And that should include regular skills checks, especially if it seems that the med isn't working.

Cost is also something the whole team, including you, can work together on. You can log into your prescription insurance account and view their covered medication list (or "formulary"). You may need the help of a pharmacist to figure out which medicines are good alternatives, and which may be the most affordable. In other cases, your doctor may be able to fill out a form so that your insurer makes the med more affordable for you. There are

also ways to get discounts or even free medications from some [drug manufacturers](#). Lots of options.

If you've decided you simply don't want to take a medication, that'll take open and honest conversations between you, your doctor, and your pharmacist. If you're worried about side effects you heard or read about, your pharmacist can help you put that information into perspective. Or maybe you just don't like taking prescription meds -- your doctor and pharmacist can make sure you know what other things you can do to improve your health. It's important for you to understand the risks of not taking the medication as well as the risks of taking it.

It's your decision

Whatever the reason for not taking your medications consistently or correctly, work with your healthcare team to find the best way forward. It'll always be your decision in the end, but knowing the risks and benefits of taking medications, knowing what alternatives are out there, and getting the right tools and instructions will help you make the best one for you.

Better My Meds is here to help!

Our pharmacist is ready to help you with all your medication questions and concerns. We are dedicated to keeping you healthy and getting the best value from your medicines. [Contact us](#) at **Better My Meds**, or leave your question and comments are welcome in the space directly below. We love hearing from you!



About Betty Chaffee

Betty Chaffee, PharmD, is owner and sole proprietor of BetterMyMeds, a Medication Management service devoted to helping people get the maximum benefit from their medications.