

Monitoring Your Treatment Plan May Be Up To You!

Betty Chaffee/ March 6, 2024/ [Medication Management](#), [Self management](#)/ [0 comments](#)



Do-It-Yourself Medication Management, Part 4

Pharmacist-provided “Medication Management Services” are our specialty at **Better My Meds**. The help of a pharmacist in managing your meds can go a long way to keeping you healthy (more on that in a later post). But there’s a lot that you can do, too, to manage your meds, and that’s what we’ve been talking about so far this year. In this post we’ll focus on your role in monitoring your response to treatment—in other words, making sure your meds are doing their jobs.

Why does monitoring matter?

A new diagnosis typically comes with a new treatment plan, often involving medications. Those medications are given with a goal in mind, and in many cases that goal is easily measured. Sometimes your doctor will need to measure the effect, maybe with blood work or scans. But very often, you’re the one who can do the measuring.

Monitoring the effectiveness of a treatment plan is extremely important for some chronic diseases. Research has shown that for those diseases and others, meeting specific goals of treatment can be the difference between staying healthy for years and being hospitalized or suffering a variety of life-altering consequences. So if you have the opportunity to help follow your progress at home, take it!

Examples of chronic health problems that benefit from self-monitoring include asthma, heart failure, high blood pressure, diabetes, and obesity. Those who know their goal of treatment and self-monitor are more likely to get [better control of their health](#) than those who don’t. They’re more likely to reach their treatment goal, stay healthier, and require less hospitalization.

Monitoring your response to treatment

Of course, for you to do the measuring, you’ll need some more information. If you have a new (or old!) diagnosis, or you’re started on a new medication (or wondering about an old one!), it’s ok to ask questions. By starting those conversations, you’re beginning to take an active role in following your own progress.

If your treatment plan includes self monitoring, here are some important questions to ask:

- What is the goal I'm shooting for?
- When should I do the measurements?
- What should I do if I'm not meeting that goal (too low or too high)?
- What's kind of device should I use to measure correctly?
- How can I learn to use the device?
- When and how should I report results?

Keep in mind that your goals of treatment for a given disease may be different from someone else's. Goals are always individualized and may differ based on age, medical history, or other considerations.

How does self-monitoring keep you healthier?

As we already discussed, research suggests that by actively following your progress you'll likely get better control of your health than if you don't. There may be several reasons for that – first, if you're interested in the outcome, you may be more likely to make it happen. And knowing the goal helps keep your eye on the outcome.

Second is the reality that sometimes our concerned-but-busy doctors don't push us as hard as they could to achieve those goals. That's called "[clinical \(or therapeutic\) inertia](#)". There's more than one reason here, too. Doctors may think we aren't going to be willing to push toward that goal. Or they may decide that progress already made is good enough for now. In a busy medical practice, a higher frequency of appointments needed to achieve a goal quickly might also get in the way of pushing toward that goal. Whatever the reason, if *you* know your health-related goal, you may be able to nudge your doctor a bit harder to help you meet it.

Technology

To be an active participant in your healthcare, you may need to purchase a device to monitor your response to treatment. Whatever measurement you're taking, you'll likely find a variety of devices available. In some cases, your insurance might cover it, in others maybe not. Get help in choosing one that's reliable, simple to use, and accurate. The paragraph below contains some links to recent articles that may help.

If you're asked to monitor your [blood pressure](#) be sure you purchase a cuff that fits your arm correctly. Choose an arm cuff rather than a wrist cuff for the best accuracy. A diagnosis of diabetes may require that you measure your [blood sugar](#) regularly. Technology to measure blood sugar is evolving, too, to make it more convenient and useful. If you have severe or chronic asthma, you may be asked to use a [peak flow meter](#) to check lung function when you aren't feeling well. And following a treatment plan for obesity may be easier and more effective using an [activity tracker](#). These are just a few examples of devices that can help you get to your goals and stay there.



Whatever type of monitoring device you'll be using, be sure you get instructions on how to use it. Online videos may provide extra help. And especially for a blood pressure cuff or peak-flow meter, taking it to your next doctor visit to validate correct use and accuracy is a must.

Your Pharmacist can help you with self monitoring

Your pharmacist is in a great position to help you with your self monitoring needs. Most pharmacies sell a variety of monitoring devices. Your pharmacist can provide instruction and help you figure out how to meet your treatment goals. At **Better My Meds** we make a point of discussing treatment goals and what to do if they're not being met. And we're always ready to help our patients use their devices correctly!

Self Monitoring is an important piece of managing medications!

We talked about a few common examples of health problems that benefit from self monitoring. But there are plenty of others. Whatever chronic health concern you might have, be sure to ask if self monitoring can help. If you have questions or comments, post them below or [contact us](#) directly at **Better My Meds**. We love hearing from you!



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