

AGING AND MEDICATION ADHERENCE

Medication adherence is VITAL to successful treatment! Studies have proven that those that take medication regularly, are less likely to face hospital and nursing home admissions. Promoting awareness of medication adherence is a significant first step to educating older adults about safe medication use.

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THE STATISTICS



55%

of American regularly take a prescribed medication.



53%

of Americans who take prescription medications say they get them from more than one healthcare provider.



75%

of Americans say that they also take at least one over-the-counter drug regularly.



35%

of Americans taking prescription medication say that a healthcare provider has NEVER reviewed their medication to see if they can stop any.

SOURCE

WHAT IS ADHERENCE?



The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), defines Medication Adherence as:

"Medication adherence, or taking medications correctly, is generally defined as the extent to which patients take medication as prescribed by their doctors. This involves factors such as getting prescriptions filled, remembering to take medication on time, and understanding the directions."

Source

***FIVE DIMENSIONS/FACTORS OF ADHERENCE -
According to the World Health Organization (WHO)***

Dimension	Examples
Health-system-related factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ease of scheduling appointments • Drug formulary changes and restrictions • Quality of communication with health-care providers
Condition-related factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asymptomatic chronic diseases that lack physical cues (e.g., high blood pressure or cholesterol, osteoporosis) • Mental health disorders (e.g., mood disorders, psychosis, dementia)
Patient-related factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical impairments (e.g., cognitive, vision, hearing, dexterity limitations) • Psychological/behavioral (e.g., anger, stress, alcoholism)
Therapy-related factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complexity of medication regimen • Duration of therapy (usually life-long) • Inconvenient therapies that interfere with lifestyle • Medications with social stigma attached (e.g., for dementia) • Medication side effects
Social- and economic-related factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low literacy; limited English language proficiency • Lack of health insurance • Cost of medications • Poor social support • Cultural beliefs and attitudes



- Medication adherence factors are **NOT** always obvious!
- Most older adults are **HESITANT** to mention their adherence issues, until they are asked.
- Others are simply **RELUCTANT** to ask or simply do not **REALIZE** they are not taking their medication due to underlying conditions such as, Alzheimer's disease or dementia.
- In most cases, older adults are typically experiencing **MULTIPLE** adherence factors at the same time.
- The four most common medication adherence challenges are associated with; management, cost, drug interactions, and decline in faculties.



#1 Management of Multiple Medications

With each new prescription, the older adult's medication routine becomes more complex, increasing the chance to reducing adherence.



#3 Drug Interactions

Prescriptions that lead to negative and potentially dangerous side effects can discourage older adults from continuing to take the medication.

#2 Cost

With increased costs, older adults are more likely to skip filling a prescription, skip a scheduled dose, and cut pills in half to save money.

#4 Decline In Faculties

Aging adults often face decreased mental and physical faculties, such as declining vision, strength, or mobility. This leads to discouragement and their ability to obtain the necessary prescriptions/refills.

WHAT CAN BE DONE?

Older adults with a caregiver, living with family, or living in a nursing home are less likely to face issues with medication adherence, but what choices and aids are available to those that cannot rely on the same care since they live alone?

Here are several approaches!



Occupational Therapy Services!

- Occupational therapists (OTs) work with the client by providing a goal-directed treatment plan, strategy, and/or intervention(s), to help them accomplish the goals that are most meaningful to them.

Example: If a client cannot remember to take their medication, or does not have the ability to track when medications are taken, an OT will use various interventions to help that client successfully complete that daily activity of living (ADL).

OT Treatment Approaches!

- Assistive Devices/Apps
- Using daily routines to promote medication adherence
- Providing clients with necessary resources (websites, handouts, community resources, etc.), to assist with potential factors and issues that the OT may not be certified in, such as reducing medication costs.
- Focus on the mental and physical faculties that have decreased with age, and provide a treatment plan to address those difficulties, such as muscle strengthening, larger print medicine labels, or helping to coordinate delivered prescriptions.

Ask Questions!

- If cost, drug side effects, and/or mental and physical faculties seem to be an issue, don't be afraid to TALK to your doctor.
- It is very IMPORTANT to speak up and talk about the concerns and mention any recent lifestyle changes that might impact medication adherence.
- Asking questions will provide your doctor the chance to offer you other professional services to better fit and address your concerns.

Linked Resources!

Click on the following references listed below to be sent to the associated website:

- [Medication Management Video](#)
- [4-Row, 7-Day Pill Organizer](#)
- [Cellphone Apps for Medication Adherence](#)

Consult other professionals!

Other than your primary care doctor (PCP), talking to your:

- Pharmacist
- Occupational Therapist
- Social worker

Can lead to understanding and discussing current prescribed prescriptions, intervention strategies, and what financial help may be currently available to cover the costs, respectively.



Occupational Engagement

- The occupational therapy interventions listed above for medication adherence for older adults can improve occupational engagement by providing them with better overall health and the possibility to remain independent in their ADLs for an extended part of their life. In general, aging adults who follow a regular routine and adhere to the prescribed medication schedule will lower their overall health costs and lead to better and improved outcomes.
- Example: An older adult that is diagnosed with diabetes and hypertension will be prescribed medication to control their blood sugar and blood pressure levels, respectively. With a proper treatment plan to assist with a medication adherence routine and providing health maintenance strategies, the client is able to live healthy and be part of their daily activities of living (ADLs). Due to the interventions such as a cellphone application or pillbox organizer, clients will be provided the opportunity of successful aging.

ICF Area of Activity or Participation Impacted:

- d6605 Assisting others in health maintenance: Assisting household members and others with formal and informal health care, such as by ensuring that a child gets regular medical check-ups, or that an elderly relative takes required medication.



SOURCE BLOCK

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