



# THE PHARMACY CORNER

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## *Understanding the Importance of Medication Compliance & Persistence*

Good health is essential for a happy life. When we are sick, it can keep us from doing the things we want or need to do. Diet and exercise can help keep us healthy, but sometimes that is not enough. Medicine may be needed to help us get better, stay healthy, and get back to doing the things we love to do.

Medications can either be used on a routine schedule or only as needed.

- Medications used "as needed" help relieve immediate symptoms such as shortness of breath, fever or short-term pain.
- Regularly "scheduled" medications will work best when used consistently as prescribed. They are used either short-term or long-term:
  - Those prescribed for short-term use, are often used to treat an illness such as a bacterial infection. It is important to complete the full course of therapy as directed.
  - Those prescribed for long-term use, are often for the maintenance of a chronic disease, such as high blood pressure, diabetes, high cholesterol, osteoporosis, asthma (inhaled steroids) etc. Some disease may progress without us 'feel' it worsening; making it important that you take your medication as directed by your doctor.

*Medication compliance* is correctly taking your medication on a day-to-day basis; with the correct dose and correct frequency (e.g. once a day, twice a day, once a week, etc). *Medication Persistence* is about taking the medication for the length of time as ordered; in other words, from starting to ending of treatment.<sup>1</sup> It is widely accepted that people who take their medications correctly and regularly have better control of their disease.

Did you know that only about 50% of the people take their medications as they should? The more common reasons why people don't take their medications are<sup>2</sup>:

- Forgetfulness
- Don't feel they need medication(s)
- Don't like taking drugs
- Don't like the side effects.

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<sup>1</sup> Cramer J, et al. *Medication Compliance Feedback and Monitoring in a Clinical Trial: Predictors and Outcomes*. Value Health 2003;6:566-73.

<sup>2</sup> Cheng JWM, et al. *Pharmacotherapy*. 2001;21(7):828-841.



CAUSE FOR NON-COMPLIANCE	SUGGESTED ACTION
Forget to fill a "maintenance" medication (e.g. medication for heart disease, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, depression, HIV, diabetes, etc)	Use a weekly pill-box to remind yourself to take your medication(s). This will also remind you to call your pharmacy a few days BEFORE you are out of medication.
Simply forgetting to take the medication(s)	You may want to make a habit of taking it around the same time as your regular daily activity (e.g. brush your teeth morning/night).
Don't like the side effects	You may want to discuss this concern with your doctor; he/she may be able to prescribe something else. Some side effects may go away with time, ask your pharmacist.
Don't think you need the medication	You may want to discuss this concern with your doctor and/or nurse. There are diseases that may worsen without you actually feeling bad. Learn about your disease and medication; this will help you be more aware of how medication will affect you.

*\*These suggestions do not replace the advice/judgments of your health care provider.*

The best thing you can do for your health is to be engaged in your care:

- Learn about your disease
- Visit your doctor as scheduled
- Take your medication regularly as directed