

Compliance with Medication and Medical Advice *By Elfat Rumman, MD*

For many individuals, medication – both prescription and over-the-counter – is an important part of their treatment plan. Medication compliance, or your ability to properly follow your provider's instruction on medication therapy, plays a key role in the effectiveness of a patient's overall treatment plan.

Here are some helpful reminders on medication compliance:

Follow directions. Some medications are used to treat symptoms and some are used to prevent disease. Skipping a dose can have serious consequences. Taking your medication as prescribed allows for the optimal level of effectiveness.

A matter of cost. With or without insurance coverage, prescription medication can be costly. To save money, some patients take only one dose a day or cut pills in half hoping to stretch out their prescription. This can negatively affect your health and will impact your treatment plan. While finances can be hard to discuss, talk to your doctor if you don't think you can afford your prescriptions.

Go all the way. I can't tell you how often patients say that they stopped taking medication once symptoms have subsided. This frequently happens with antibiotics. By taking them for only a few days instead of the full course, the antibiotic might eliminate some of the bacteria but the surviving bacteria become more resistant and can be spread to others.

For those on long-term therapy, such as thyroid or heart medications, being faithful to your prescription regime is just

as important. Research reveals that the rate of medication compliance goes down after the first six months of starting the therapy. Taking medication as prescribed is essential for both short- and long-term therapy.

No sharing. Prescriptions are not one-size-fits-all. Rather, they are prescribed for each patient based on weight, other medications being used, blood pressure, etc. It's also important to know that it is against the law to share prescription pain medications with others.

The sum of the parts. Your provider needs to know everything you're taking including prescription and over-the-counter medications as well as vitamins and supplements.

Certain drugs and even supplements can interfere with prescription medicine effectiveness. In addition to bringing an updated medication list with you to all medical visits, it's also helpful to use the same pharmacy so that they can help monitor for potential drug interactions.

It's okay to ask. Research shows that some of the most common causes of errors in taking medications are caused by misunderstanding directions. Not everyone is comfortable asking questions. Remember, you play a key role in your own well-being. If you don't understand what a medication is for, how or when you should take it or if you feel overwhelmed by the high volume of medications required per day, talk to your provider.

We truly are here to help and welcome your questions!

Insurance through the ACC

Open enrollment for those without health insurance through the Affordable Care Act's Health Insurance Marketplace began October 1st. Residents of Arizona should go to www.healthcare.gov to apply for coverage, compare your options, and enroll. The site also addresses eligibility requirements and cost options. Coverage can start as soon as January 1, 2014.



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