

Improving medication adherence

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Goals can motivate you



Use your goals to motivate you—do you want to attend your son's graduation ceremony, travel to that dream destination, or achieve your cholesterol targets? Taking your medications allows you to manage your condition and maintain the best possible health.¹

Work with your healthcare professionals



- Know about your condition and what your medications are for.² Make sure that you are clear with the instructions on how to take your medications.³ Ask your healthcare professionals about how to manage your medications, eg, possible side effects, other medications or foods to avoid, when you should expect it to start working, and what to do if you forget your dose.^{1,2}
- Remember to keep your doctor's appointments and keep a strong relationship with your healthcare professionals.^{1,4} Talk to your doctor or pharmacist about your experiences with your medications, eg, how you feel after changes in medication.² Let them know if you experience side effects that make you stop taking your medication, because they might be able to recommend a different medication for you.⁵ Raise any questions or concerns and tell them about your preferences, limitations and priorities.² They are there to help you
- Talk to your doctor about simplifying your medication regimens, eg, if it is possible to be prescribed medications that need to be taken once or twice daily, instead of multiple times.^{3,5} If you need to take more than one medication, ask about taking two medicines in one tablet (a combination tablet), instead of having to take them separately. Combination tablets are available for some medications—they make medication-taking easier, and might even reduce costs.⁶
- Get a second opinion from another healthcare professional if you do not agree with what one doctor or pharmacist tells you about taking a medication.¹

Medication Therapy Adherence Clinic

- The **Medication Therapy Adherence Clinic (MTAC)** is part of the clinical pharmacy services in Ambulatory Care that emphasizes on medication management to improve the quality, safety and cost-effectiveness of patient care. This is operated by pharmacists in association with doctors, and the Diabetes MTAC (DMTAC) is one of the services. Most Malaysian government hospitals and health clinics provide DMTAC, which aim is to help patients with diabetes achieve better medication adherence level and glycaemic control. If you are interested, ask your pharmacist if you are able to join this service. Apart from improving your knowledge and adherence towards diabetes medications, the service can also improve your knowledge towards diabetes and its complications, and reduce side effects/complications due to multiple drug regimens.⁷



Organize medication taking



- If you tend to forget to take your medications, use your phone or alarm clock as a reminder.^{2,8}
- Pill boxes can help keep your medications organized.²
- A medication tracker to write down each medication you take and when you take it can be useful.²
- Make taking medications a part of your routine, and take them at the same times daily.⁶

You and your family



- Get the support of your family.³
- Get involved in your care through self-monitoring.^{3,6}
- Remember: Apart from medications, you should stick to a healthy **diet** and **weight**, and **exercise** regularly too!^{3,6}



Avoid unhealthy food



Exercise regularly



Keep a healthy weight

Costs



If you cannot afford the cost of your medications, ask your doctor or pharmacist if there are generic versions available.² Generic medicines are generally cheaper. You can also look into how your personal or employer's health insurance coverage might be able to help. Alternatively, you might want to consider getting your medications from a government hospital or clinic, where medications can be obtained for free or at a highly subsidized rate.⁸

References

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