

Sick People Fail To Take Medicines That Will Help Them

(NAPSA)—When sick patients don't respond to their medicine, doctors have questions. "Are patients not responding to the prescribed therapy? Or are they not taking their medicine in the prescribed manner?"

Several studies exploring this question underline the extent of the problem. A study of 17,685 patients covered by Medicare done by the Kaiser Family Foundation and The Commonwealth Fund found that four out of 10 seniors were not taking medications as prescribed. A Harris Interactive online survey of 2,507 U.S. adults in 2005 found that 33 percent of those who are prescribed drugs to take on a regular basis reported that they "often" or "very often" don't take their prescribed medication or treatment regimens for a number of reasons.

Lack of medication adherence, as health experts call this issue, is a major public health problem. Consequences of lack of medication adherence may include substantial worsening of disease, preventable death, unnecessary hospitalization and increased health care costs. It's a problem that affects people regardless of ethnicity, income level or sex.

In addition, the financial costs are enormous. The estimated annual cost to the U.S. economy from lack of medication adherence is \$100 billion. This is a result of medication-related hospital and nursing home admissions, lost productivity and premature death.

Addressing the issue requires increased education and awareness of the importance of medication adherence. Patients, or family caregivers who have responsibility for others, should always make sure to ask the doctor:

1. How often should I take my medication and when?
2. What are the benefits of taking this medication?

Adherence Facts and Figures

- Forty percent of U.S. seniors do not take their medicines as prescribed.
- One in three U.S. adults admit they often don't take their prescription medicines.
- Lack of medication adherence costs the U.S. economy \$100 billion annually.



3. How long do I need to take my medication?

4. What are the side effects? What should I do if I have side effects?

5. Are there certain medications I need to avoid?

In addition, there are several things patients and caregivers can do at home to decrease interruptions to the prescription medication routine:

1. Use pillboxes or other special medication holders to organize your medications by hour, day and week so you can see if you have missed a day or a dose.

2. Link taking your medications with a routine event, such as brushing your teeth or shaving.

3. Keep your medications in a familiar place so they are the first thing you see in the morning. If you have to take your medication with meals, keep them in a safe place in the kitchen.

4. Consider using reminder devices like an alarm from cell phone calls at certain times, an automatic pill dispenser with a sound alarm, or a pager to help you remember when to take your medications.

5. Keep a checklist to remind you to take your medicines each day.

6. Plan ahead and give yourself enough time to refill your prescription before the current one runs out.

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