

The Importance of Medications Adherence

Modern health care has become very expensive. State-of-the-art advances in diagnosis and therapy are responsible for some of the rising cost associated with health care today, but not all of it. One major factor in the cost of health care, surprisingly enough, is patient noncompliance.

Noncompliance is defined as “the failure or refusal to comply.” Noncompliance might be better referred to as an adherence problem, with adherence being defined as “the extent to which the patient continues the agreed-upon mode of treatment under limited supervision when faced with conflicting demands.”

This is not a new problem; it has been a concern for well over 2000 years. Sometime near the year 430 BC, Hippocrates wrote: “Keep watch also on the fault of patients which often makes them lie about taking of things prescribed.”

It has been estimated that every year lack of adherence drains the nation’s economy of \$100 billion in healthcare expenses. Indirect costs include \$50 billion in lost productivity. It has also been estimated that out of all of the prescriptions dispensed each year, 50% are taken incorrectly.

It is important to realize that the majority of people are not intentionally noncompliant. They do not set out to take the wrong amount of medication or to take it at the wrong time. Many do not even realize they are not taking it properly. They simply do not understand how they should be taking their medication and why it is so important to take it correctly.

Whether intentional or not, if a patient is not adherent, they are not getting the full therapeutic benefit from their medication and may face serious consequences because of this fact. Noncompliance is counterproductive to the healthcare system’s efforts to provide the best possible care for its patients.

Adherence is related to understanding. If you as a patient are informed and understand the important aspects of medication therapy, then adherence will improve. Here are 10 things that you should know about each and every medication you are currently taking as well as future medications that might be prescribed for you:

1. What is the medications name?
2. Why am I taking this medication?
3. How much should I take at a time (how much is a dose)?
4. How often do I take the medication?
5. When do I take the medication each day?
6. How long should I keep taking the medication?
7. What food, drinks, other medications or activities should I avoid while taking this medication?
8. What are the potential side effects of this medication and what should I do if I have them?
9. Where should I keep this medication (refrigerated or not)?
10. Do I need to get this medication refilled, is so when should I do so?

You should feel comfortable about asking questions if you do not understand your medications. This is your medication and your therapy. If you know about your medications and are well informed or educated about them and how to use them, then the outcome from their use will be much better.

MaxorPlus, your pharmacy benefit management provider, and your employer are working together to help ensure that you are provided with excellent, cost-effective and relevant medications as well as medical information to help meet your healthcare needs. — *MaxorPlus Clinical Pharmacy Department*