



The importance of treatment adherence

Information for people with multiple myeloma



Contents

Why is it important to follow your doctor's treatment recommendation?	5
Adherence and types of medication	7
Tips to maintain adherence	8
Reporting side effects	11

All the photographs of people in this booklet are models and are included just to illustrate the publication.



Why is it important to follow your doctor's treatment recommendations?

'Adhering' to your treatment

Your doctor has prescribed medication for you that aims to improve your health. If you follow the treatment as agreed with your doctor, you are considered adherent.^{1,2}

For medication to work properly, you need to take it the right way, at the right time.

In practical terms, adherence means:²⁻⁴

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Taking the correct dose	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Taking medication at the correct time	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Removing certain foods, or liquids, or both, from your diet to avoid those that could interact with your medication	

Non-adherence

If you do not take the medication as prescribed, you are considered to be 'non-adherent'.^{2,3} This means:

- You take an incorrect dose
(e.g. missing a dose because you forget to take your medication)
- You take the medication at the incorrect time
- You stop the treatment on your own initiative
- You consume foods, or liquids, or both, that interact with your medication

Why does someone become 'non-adherent' to treatment?^{2,3}

There are many reasons why you may be non-adherent to your treatment.

Difficulty remembering

Perhaps your treatment schedule is complex, and you find it difficult to remember to take different medications at different times.

Difficulty understanding

You may have trouble understanding precisely what you have to do and why you have to do it.

Side effects

You do not take the medication because you are anxious about possible side effects.

You feel well

Your disease feels manageable without the need for medication.



Adherence and types of medication

When talking about adherence, the types of medication we are talking about include:

- pills
- inhalers, for example, in the case of asthma
- injections, in the case of diabetes
- drops
- syrup
- ointment



What are the risks of non-adherence?

If you do not adhere to your treatment, you should remember:^{3,5}

- Your medication will be less effective
- Side effects may be more likely

If you don't adhere to your treatment it can also:^{3,5,6}

- make it more difficult to control your disease
- make your disease worse
- increase the symptoms you have
- lead to hospitalisation that could otherwise be prevented
- negatively impact on your quality of life and life expectancy





Tips to maintain adherence

Do you sometimes forget to take your medication? Or are you afraid that this will happen? The following tips are simple ways of making it easier to remember to take your medication.



Use a pill box

A pill box helps you to keep track of whether or not you have taken your medication. They are useful for people taking several pills per day and at different times. A pill box fits easily into a handbag or pocket, making it ideal for when you're traveling. You can find pill boxes at most pharmacies or supermarkets. Check with your pharmacist before using a pill box, as some tablets are particularly sensitive to moisture.



Use your phone

Your mobile phone or smartphone is a useful tool for setting reminders.



Use a calendar or diary

You can also use a paper calendar or diary to note down when you must take which medication. Remember to keep this updated and show each time that you have taken your medication. You can do this for example at fixed times, or when you perform a particular task.

It is important to develop a good routine that helps you to think about your medication. Above all, choose a way that feels right for you.



Link your medication to daily activity

Take your medication when you perform a daily activity such as cleaning your teeth. Always position your medication in sight, so that you think about it, but make sure it's out of reach of young children and pets.



Ask your family or friends to remind you

A lot of friends and family also take medication. It may help to coordinate with others and remind one another.

Do you live alone? You can ask a family member or friend to send you a text message every morning or evening. Or you can put up a large poster showing all the medication you have to take.



Ask your doctor to simplify your medication

Do you struggle to remember your medication, despite all your attempts? Discuss this with your doctor – it may be possible to simplify your medication schedule. You may be able to switch from a medication that is taken two or three times a day, to one which is taken only once a day.

Reporting side effects

Talk to your doctor or nurse if you experience any side effects.

This also applies to side effects not listed in the package leaflet. You can also report side effects directly through the national reporting system and ask your doctor if you need further information. By reporting side effects, you help in collecting information about the safety of medicines.



This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

References

1. World Health Organization. Adherence to long-term therapies – evidence for action. Available at: <https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/42682/9241545992.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>. Last accessed: December 2024.
2. International Myeloma Foundation. Understanding adherence to oral cancer therapy. Available at: <https://doczz.net/doc/7921182/understanding-adherence-to-oral-cancer-therapy>. Last accessed: December 2024.
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4. Given B, *et al.* *Asia Pac J Oncol Nurs*. 2017;4:275–282.
5. Ruddy K, *et al.* *CA Cancer J Clin*. 2009;59:56–66.
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This information is intended for patients with multiple myeloma and is intended to inform patients about the clinical characteristics and treatment of their condition. You are receiving this information through the doctor treating you.

