

NEUROSCIENCE TREATMENT TEAM PARTNER PROGRAM

Team Solutions
Getting the Best Results From
Your Medicine

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Getting the Best Results From Your Medicine

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The Medicine Maze

People who take medicines sometimes feel as if they're caught in a maze. They may find it hard to keep up with the routine of taking their medicine every day.

It may not feel natural to take medicine every day. But for many people, medicine can make a big difference in their lives—that is, if they take it the right way, every day.

This booklet was written to help you get through the medicine maze—to get the best results from your medicine. That way, you may feel better and be able to get on with other things in your life.



Why Take Medicine?

Some people say they can't "feel" their medicine working, and they wonder what good it can do. Unlike aspirin for a headache or medicine to relieve a cough, you probably can't feel the way your medicine is helping relieve your symptoms. That's because the medicine works slowly. You probably can't see the difference from day to day—it may take several weeks before you notice how your symptoms have improved.

Some people find their medicine helps them in several ways. Here are some examples:

- *"My medicine helps me feel calmer and more relaxed."*
- *"My symptoms aren't as bad when I take my medicine."*
- *"I don't feel any different when I take it or don't take it, but it keeps me out of the hospital."*
- *"I have a job and it's easier to concentrate if I keep taking my medicine."*



List your reasons why you might want to take medicine for your symptoms.

List your reasons why you might not want to take your medicine.

Identifying Possible Stumbling Blocks

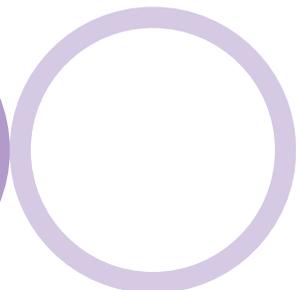
If you're the type of person who doesn't like to take medicine, you're not alone! Many people who take medicines for other health problems (such as high blood pressure or diabetes) feel this way too.

There are many reasons why people don't (or can't) always take their medicine the right way. Below are some of the reasons people have mentioned. **Check off any that may apply to you. Then turn to the pages listed after the statement to find ideas on how to handle the problem.**



Sometimes I miss doses of my medicine (or don't want to take my medicine) because...

- "I don't want anyone to know I'm taking medicine—I feel embarrassed."* 6
- "I forget to take it sometimes."* 11
- "I get confused about which medicine to take at what time."* 11
- "My medicine causes side effects that really bother me."* 18
- "I feel like a zombie when I'm on medicine. People say I look like I'm out of it."* 6 and 18
- "My family (or friends) told me to stop taking the medicine."* 7





- "The medicine is too expensive."* 17
- "I can't get to the pharmacy to get my prescription refilled."* 13
- "I don't know how to get my medicine."* 13
- "I can't pay for the medicine."* 17
- "Sometimes I like to go drinking with my friends and I know I shouldn't mix medicine with alcohol."* 20
- "There's an alternative treatment I'd like to try instead."* 21
- "I don't need the medicine—I'm not really sick."* 22
- "I'm recovered, so I don't need it any more."* 22
- "I don't know why I have to take medicine."* 22
- "I feel better when I stop taking it."* 18

When you are finished reviewing the pages that you checked, read pages 8-10, then continue with pages 23-26.



Nobody Has To Know...

You may not want other people to know you're taking medicine. Many people feel this way. They worry that other people will think that taking medicine is a sign of weakness or that something's wrong with them. Whatever the reason, the truth is that *nobody has to know* you're taking medicine. In fact, if your medicine is controlling your symptoms, no one may even know you have an illness.

If you're concerned that someone might see you taking your medicine (in public), speak with your doctor. You may be able to take your medicine during different times of the day. Some medicines can be taken once or twice a day, and you could take them at home, in private.

If you think you might look "out of it" because of the medicine, tell your doctor. Feeling slowed down may be a side effect of the medicine. Your doctor may be able to adjust your dosage or change your medicine if this side effect really bothers you.



Handling Other People's Opinions

When it comes to taking medicine, everyone seems to have an opinion. Some people are afraid of medicines—they may not understand why it's so important for you to take your medicine, especially when you feel well.

If your family member's or friend's opinion about your illness or medicine is different from your doctor's opinion, what should you do? It may be helpful for your family member or friend to talk to your doctor. That way they can tell your doctor about their concerns. And your doctor can tell them about your treatment plan and why your medicines are being recommended.



Reaching Your Goals



If you could do anything you wanted to do, what would it be?



When asked this question, some people have answered:

- *“I’d like to have a girlfriend (or boyfriend).”*
- *“I would like to live in my own place.”*
- *“I wasn’t feeling well and had to leave school. I’d like to go back and graduate.”*
- *“I’d like to find a job where the people are nice and don’t hassle me.”*



There are too many responses to list them all in this booklet. It seems that almost everyone has a dream or a goal they would like to reach.

What are your goals?

The Ingredients of Success

To reach any goal, there are certain basic things everyone needs. One is desire (a strong interest in what you want to do). Another is persistence (to keep on going, even when there are setbacks). There are other important things you'll need to reach your goals.

Think about your goals. What else do you think you'll need to succeed? Check off the things you think you'll need to reach your goals.



Understanding of other people

Knowledge or job training

Other people you can trust



A car or other transportation

Being healthy

Other: _____



Which do you think is the most important? Why?

Which do you think is the least important? Why?

Being Healthy Is Key to Success

Many people don't list "being healthy" as most important for meeting their goals. But if you're not feeling well, it's hard to do (or get) everything else on the list. For example, if you have an illness that interferes with your concentration, it would be very difficult to train for a job. Even the most intelligent person would have trouble training for a job if his or her concentration wasn't as good as it used to be.



If you have an illness that makes you feel nervous, you might find it very difficult to be around other people, drive a car, or do your work. Having trouble sleeping at night might make you too tired to accomplish anything.

The medicine your doctor prescribed for you may help you sleep better, feel less nervous, and concentrate better. You may not feel any benefits from the medicine right away, but over time you'll probably start to notice how much better you feel—your medicine may make it easier for you to reach your goals by controlling your symptoms.



Taking Your Medicine Properly Can Make a Big Difference

Anyone can forget to take his or her medicine once in a while. But missing too many doses can be harmful. This is true for most illnesses. For example, people with high blood pressure who miss too many doses of their blood pressure medicine may increase their risk of having a stroke. Likewise, people with a mental illness may increase their risk of having a relapse of their symptoms if they miss too many doses of their medicine.

If you're taking several medicines, it may be confusing to remember when to take each one. Or you might be so busy thinking about other things, you might forget to take your medicine. Whatever the reason, there are things you can do to help yourself take your medicine properly every day. The next few pages provide tips that may make it easier for you to take your medicine the way your doctor recommends.

Take Your Medicine at the Same Time Every Day

You may find it easier to remember to take your medicine if you take it the same time every day—or with another activity you do every day. For instance, some people take their medicine in the morning when they brush their teeth. That way, there's less chance they'll miss their dose.



What activities do you do at the same time every day?

Activity: _____ Time: _____

Activity: _____ Time: _____



Activity: _____ Time: _____

Activity: _____ Time: _____

Which activities could you use to help you remember to take your medicines? List them below: *(example: brush teeth—take morning dose)*

Make It Simple



People who take a lot of medicines often have a hard time keeping track of the doses they've taken during the day. The same is true for people who take several doses of their medicine every day. If you're taking many doses of medicine a day, you may want to talk to your doctor, nurse, case manager, or pharmacist—they can help you in the following ways:



- Your doctor may be able to change your medicine schedule so that you take fewer doses each day.
- Your case manager may help you set up a medicine schedule that's linked with certain activities you do every day.
- You can buy a pill container at the pharmacy. Then you can organize your pills in a pill container so it's easier for you to keep track of the doses you've taken.
- Some people find it helpful to use a calendar to keep track of the doses they've taken. They write a check mark on the calendar each day after they've taken their dose.



What method would you like to use?



What will you plan to do?

When Your Medicine Runs Out



Have you ever missed doses because you ran out of your medicine and couldn't get it refilled on time? This is a common problem—sometimes it may take a day or two to get a prescription refilled.

Some people's prescriptions run out because they have difficulty getting their medicines refilled. Or they might feel nervous about taking the bus to get to the pharmacy. If you've ever felt this way, you might want to try these suggestions:

- Use a pharmacy that will deliver your medicine to your home—ask your nurse or case manager to help you find a pharmacy that has a delivery service.
- Get your prescriptions filled through a mail-order pharmacy—you'll receive your medicine in the mail.
- Ask a family member or friend to pick up the prescription for you.
- Ask your case manager to help you plan what to do if your medicine runs out.



If my medicine is beginning to run out, I will:

If my medicine runs out, I will:

Mail-Order Pharmacies



Some mail-order pharmacies take a long time to refill your prescription. So you may need to call the pharmacy for a refill one or two weeks ahead of time. If you want to get your medicine through the mail, ask your nurse or case manager to help you find a mail-order pharmacy.

Mail-order pharmacies you might want to try:

Name: _____ Phone number: _____

Name: _____ Phone number: _____

Questions to ask the pharmacist:

1. I have a new prescription and I'm sending it to you today.
How long will it take to get my medicine?

2. What information should be on my prescription when I mail it to you?



3. How much will my prescription cost?

4. How should I pay for it?



5. How can I get a refill when my medicine runs out?

Neighborhood Pharmacies

Here are some tips that may make it easier for you to get your medicine from the neighborhood pharmacy:



Tip 1:

Use a pharmacy that delivers your medicine.

If you have a new prescription, you can bring it to the pharmacy to have it filled. If you don't want to go to the pharmacy, here's what you can do:

1. Give your nurse the name and phone number of a pharmacy that will deliver your medicine to your house.
2. Ask your nurse to call the pharmacy and give the prescription to the pharmacist over the phone. The pharmacist will fill your prescription and send it to your home—you won't have to go to the pharmacy at all.

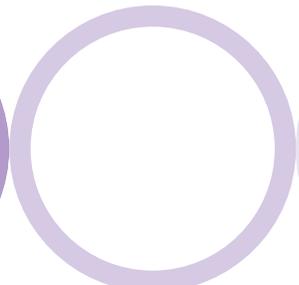


Neighborhood pharmacies that deliver:

Name: _____ Phone number: _____

Name: _____ Phone number: _____

Name: _____ Phone number: _____



Tip 2:

Use your prescription bottle to order refills.

Your prescription bottle has all the information you need to get your prescription refilled:



- The pharmacy's phone number
- The name of your medicine
- The prescription number
- The number of refills you have left
- Your doctor's name

Call the pharmacy for a refill at least four days before your medicine runs out. This will give the pharmacy enough time to order your medicine if it's not on the shelf, then fill your prescription.

If there are no refills left on your prescription, call your doctor or nurse so they can call the pharmacy and order more refills for you.



Tip 3:

Call the pharmacy before you pick up your medicine.

Before you go to pick up your prescription, call the pharmacy to make sure it's ready. If there's any kind of problem and your medicine is not ready, you'll know that you will have to pick it up later.

Tip 4:

If you have any kind of problem getting your medicine, call your case manager as soon as possible.

If you can't get your medicine from the pharmacy, you might miss doses. Call your case manager right away—your case manager can talk with the pharmacist and help you take care of the problem.

Paying for Your Medicine



Some medicines are expensive—and some people have tried to save money by skipping doses. Missing doses like this is a bad idea because there may not be enough medicine in your system to keep your symptoms under control.

If you are worried about the cost of your medicine, speak with your case manager. There may be special programs that can help pay for your medicine. If you don't have insurance or a special program to help pay for your medicine, speak with your doctor. Your doctor may have other suggestions.



Coping With Side Effects From Your Medicine

Medicines affect different people in different ways. Some people may have a few side effects (unwanted effects) from taking a medicine. Others may not have any side effects at all, even though they are taking the same medicine in the same dosage.

The kind of reaction you will have to any medicine depends mostly on your body's chemistry. The amount of medicine you're taking (your dosage) can also be a factor.

Side Effects Don't Always Have to Be a Problem



If side effects from your medicine are bothering you, tell your doctor as soon as possible. There are a few things your doctor may want to try that could help you:



- Some side effects are temporary. They go away as you keep taking your medicine. Your doctor may advise you to keep taking your medicine and see if it improves over time.
- Adjusting the dosage of your medicine may make a big difference. It may take a few adjustments—the goal is to find the dosage that relieves your symptoms without causing so many side effects.
- Adding another medicine to your treatment may help relieve your side effects. For example, tremors (shaking) might be treated by adding a second medicine.
- Your doctor may want you to try a different medicine that could have fewer side effects.



Have any side effects been bothering you recently? List each side effect below and place a check in the box that describes how much it bothers you.

Side effect	Bothers you a lot	Bothers you a little	Doesn't bother you at all

Have you ever wanted to stop your treatment because of these side effects?

- Yes No Unsure

If any of these bother you a lot, talk to your doctor as soon as you can.



Mixing Your Medicine With Alcohol or Other Drugs



You may think that mixing your medicine with alcohol or street drugs can be dangerous. You're right. Alcohol and street drugs can cause problems by upsetting the balance of your brain's chemistry. They can also interfere with the way your medicine works.

Some people think about stopping their medicine if they plan to go drinking with their friends or use street drugs. But stopping your medicine is the worst thing you can do if you have an illness—without your medicine, your symptoms will probably return. You may have a relapse of your symptoms and might have to go to the hospital.

Talk to your doctor about going out with your friends and drinking alcohol. Your doctor may be able to tell you if it's okay to drink alcohol (what kind and how much), even though you're still taking your medicine.



Using Alternative Medicines



The medicine your doctor prescribed for you plays a major role in your treatment. But sometimes, people look for other ways to treat their symptoms. For example, there's been a lot of talk about megavitamins and other natural products to treat the symptoms you've been having. Some people may find them helpful. But you might have some problems if you switch from your regular medicine to an alternative medicine:



- Some medicines might cause dangerous side effects if you stop them suddenly. If you're planning to stop your medicine, talk to your doctor first.
- Some alternative medicines may not work for you. If you stop your regular medicine, your symptoms may return. You might have to go to the hospital if your symptoms get out of control.
- If you want to try an alternative treatment, ask your doctor if you can take an alternative medicine *with* your regular medicine. That way, you'll be able to see if you feel any better after starting the alternative medicine.

It's best not to change your treatment on your own. If you have information about the alternative treatment you're interested in trying, bring that information with you to your next doctor appointment. Your doctor may be able to answer your questions about the alternative treatment and how it may affect you.



Are You Fully Recovered?

If you've been taking your medicine for a long time and have no symptoms, you're *very* lucky! But don't be fooled—just because you have no symptoms doesn't always mean that you're cured.



What do you think might happen if you stop your medicine?

Write your answer in the spaces below:

It's Important to Continue Your Medicine

Research has shown that even when symptoms go away, it is still best if people continue to take their medicines as prescribed. If you're like most people who have an underlying mental illness and you stop your medicine, the following may happen:

1. Your symptoms may return (*but you may not notice them until it's too late*).
2. You may have a relapse.
3. You may have to go to the hospital.

Keep The Balance

Having to go back to the hospital can really interrupt your life. It's a lot easier to *prevent* symptoms from returning than it is to *start* treatment all over again. Continue taking your medicine—it's the best insurance policy you have against symptoms.

How Much Do You Know?

Here are some common questions that people ask their doctors about their medicine. See if you know some of the answers:



Question: What if I want to stop my medicine?

Your answer:





Answer: Some medicines can cause side effects if they are stopped suddenly. If you feel you must stop your medicine, do it with your doctor's help. That way, you'll be able to stop it the right way.

If you do stop taking your medicine, be sure to stay in touch with your doctor, just in case you need help. Visit your doctor from time to time to have your symptoms checked. And try to have an open mind—you may decide to start treatment again some day.





Question: I stopped my medicine and now I'm having trouble sleeping. I'd like to call my doctor, but I don't want to tell him I stopped taking my medicine. What should I do?



Your answer:



Answer: It sounds like you're worried that your doctor will be angry with you for stopping your medicine. But it's good that you realize you might need help. (Trouble sleeping may be an early warning symptom that you are starting to relapse.)

It's best to talk openly with your doctor. But if you feel too uncomfortable talking to your doctor, you may want to talk with your nurse or case manager. They could speak to your doctor for you.



Question: I've been taking my medicine for several months and still have some symptoms. When will these symptoms be gone?



Your answer:



Answer: It might take a very long time for some people's symptoms to improve or disappear. And people often have symptoms that don't disappear completely. If you have symptoms that are still bothering you, tell your doctor. Your medicine dosage may have to be adjusted. Or your doctor may give you an additional medicine to help relieve your symptoms. Keep trying, and keep asking questions—new information and new answers might become available as time goes on.





What should I do if I miss a dose of my medicine?

Your answer:





Answer: The answer to this question depends on the medicine you're taking. Fill in the names of your medicines and the times you're supposed to take them on the lines below. Ask your doctor or nurse what you should do if you miss a dose and write the answer below.



Name of medicine: _____

Dosage time(s): _____

What to do if a dose is missed: _____



Name of medicine: _____

Dosage time(s): _____

What to do if a dose is missed: _____



Name of medicine: _____

Dosage time(s): _____

What to do if a dose is missed: _____

Mastering the Medicine Maze

You may have special goals that you're trying to reach. But it's hard to work toward your goals when you're not feeling well.

One of the first steps in reaching your goals is to master the medicine maze. Taking your medicine the right way, every day can help you get the best results from your medicine—you may feel better sooner. And when you feel better, it might be easier for you to work toward your goals...and reach them!

