



Medication Adherence for Providers

What is medication adherence?

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) defines medication adherence (taking medications correctly) as “the extent to which patients take medications as prescribed by their doctors. This involves factors such as getting prescriptions filled, remembering to take medication on time, and understanding the directions.”

Why is medication adherence important?

If medications are not taken as prescribed, the desired treatment will not be accomplished. Not getting intended treatment may lead to more complications.

As a provider agency, how do I ensure adherence?

1. Identifying potential adherence concerns and tailor interventions accordingly.
 - a. Pharmacy refill data – some pharmacies are proactive
 - b. Obtain access to claims data through portals (EPIC, Medicaid) or insurers
 - c. Have clear, concise, and articulate communication with patients
 - d. Tell-tale behaviors: procrastination, forgetfulness, confusion caused by multiple medications

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2. Incorporating adherence assessment tools at each visit.
 - a. “Start the conversation” with each new prescription. One easy tool is the [Adherence Estimator](#).
 - b. An adherence tool validated in schizophrenia is the [BARS \(Brief Adherence Rating scale\)](#). (The site requires registration to view this, which is free).
3. Providing pharmacy support.

Some pharmacies offer enhanced services. North Carolina has a [Community Pharmacy Enhanced Services Network \(CPESN\)](#), which allows you to search for pharmacies by desired service, patient zip code or county. Among the 40+ enhanced pharmacy services to target patients’ issues impacting adherence are:

 - a. Medication synchronization (picking up all ongoing prescription refills at the pharmacy on a single day of the month)
 - b. Reminder calls
 - c. Home delivery
 - d. Various forms of adherence packaging
 - e. Setting up accounts for copays
 - f. Counseling/reinforcement
4. Long-acting antipsychotic medications (LAAM). (Start early. LAAMs should not be treated as last resort or punishment for poor adherence.)
5. Technology (apps/programs to help members set reminders).
 - a. [Medisafe](#): reminders, tracking health information
 - b. [MyMedSchedule](#): text and email reminders, create med schedules, track health/lab info
 - c. Send text message or email reminders such as [Upland Software](#) or [Televox](#)
 - d. Other [apps for medication adherence](#)

What are the barriers to medication adherence?

The most common barriers to medication adherence include:

- ✓ Inability to pay for medication.
- ✓ Inability to pick up medication.
- ✓ Confusion about how and when to take medications.
- ✓ Disbelief that treatment is necessary or helping.
- ✓ Difficulty keeping up with multiple medications and complex dosing schedules.

How to work with members on medication compliance

- Communicate with members.
- Perform medication reconciliation to engage members in conversations about their medications.
- Work with the integrated healthcare team to ensure compliance, including the member’s pharmacy.
- Provide member education regarding prescriptions (pharmacist-led interventions).
- Assist in finding lower prescription costs (some drug companies offer assistance).
- Use data to inform your interventions.
- Medication delivery.
- Text messaging nudges and reminders.