



RETIREE RXCARE™ NEWSLETTER

MEDICATION ADHERENCE: MORE THAN JUST A PILL

Taking medications as directed can be difficult. But when medications are not taken regularly for long term conditions, the cost is more than just a small piece of the copay. Lack of adherence to medications is estimated to cost the US healthcare system between 100 and 300 billion dollars every year. Why are people having such trouble taking their medications? From cost, abandoned prescriptions because of prior authorization requirements, forgetfulness, or just plain not thinking that you need to take them are all common reasons.

WHY IS IT SO HARD TO TAKE MEDICATION REGULARLY?

Cost is certainly one of the biggest hurdles to being able to take medications regularly. With the average senior citizen taking more than 5 medications, and prescription prices always rising, some will choose to go without, decrease their doses by splitting pills, or may skip days to make ends meet. While especially important for seniors, truly everyone may benefit by speaking to their prescribers about the value of older, generic medications, or even combinations of generic medications that may be just as effective, and likely cheaper than one newer, brand name medication.

Probably one of the most deceiving things about chronic health conditions like high blood pressure or depression is that once a person finds an effective medication to manage their condition, they start feeling better, and it seems like they are “cured.” Unfortunately, these conditions do not usually go away, and can lead to much higher costs if and when a hospital visit is required because of a stopped medication.

HOW DO I MAKE IT WORK?

What can we do to combat this massive problem? Work with your health care providers, like doctors, nurses, and pharmacists, to find the best options for medications that also fits your budget. Be sure you truly understand your condition, and how your medications work. Talk to your providers about decreasing doses before trying it on your own. Sometimes, it might be safe to decrease a medication, or stop it altogether for certain reasons but, your doctor and pharmacist working together will be able to help you do it safely and avoid a possible hospital visit. Furthermore, if you find yourself just forgetting to take your medication frequently, invest in a pill box so that your daily medications are laid out for you. Place this some where that you will remember, but also out of the reach of children: possibly in the cupboard next to the morning coffee, or next to the alarm clock so you are reminded both in the morning and at night, if that is needed. If a medication needs to be taken mid-day, set an alarm on your phone, and be sure to carry the dose with you. If you still have trouble, talk to your doctor or pharmacist about other options to help you stay as healthy as possible.

References:

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