

# Addressing Medication Adherence to Improve Health Outcomes

**CONTRIBUTING AUTHORS:** Marilee Clemons, PharmD, BCACP; Sarah Aldrich, PharmD, BCACP; Bree Meinzer, PharmD, BCACP; Elizabeth Beverly, PhD; and Shireen Khoury, MD, MPH on behalf of Team Best Practices

Did you know that for every 100 prescriptions written, only about 50 leave the pharmacy, about 30 are taken as written, and about 20 are refilled as prescribed?<sup>1</sup>

Taking medications as prescribed is one key to controlling chronic health problems and improving health outcomes. Many factors contribute to regimen nonadherence, some of which disproportionately affect patients with low incomes or low health literacy.<sup>2-4</sup>

It is difficult to improve adherence effectively without first understanding the reason(s) for nonadherence. Aim to investigate which barriers to adherence patients face.<sup>5</sup> These strategies may be helpful whether visits are in-person or via telehealth:

- 1. Obtain objective information** to review adherence practices, such as fill history, using pharmacy claims data and clinical information from electronic medical records (EMR).
- 2. Solicit subjective information** by asking the patient open-ended questions regarding adherence to promote a productive conversation and judgement-free environment.
- 3. Address health literacy** by using non-medical language and pictures whenever possible.

An appropriate strategy can be matched to the concerns at hand with a better understanding of the barriers patients face. The chart below offers tips to help prevent and address nonadherence. For more information, access Cardi-OH’s expanded resource on [medication adherence](#) for clinicians.



## Ways To Address Nonadherence



### Adverse Effects

### Cost

### Lack of Understanding

### Forgetfulness

### Regimen Complexity

Prescribe alternative medication

Encourage the use of manufacturer coupons

Educate patient on disease state, lifestyle, and/or medications

Set alarms for reminders

Change formulation (once daily vs. twice daily)

Switch formulation of medication

Ensure patient is using in-network pharmacy

Refer patient to specialists for additional education (e.g., dietitian)

Keep medications in a visible place

Deprescribe medications

Provide education to address perceived adverse effects

Investigate insurance formulary

Assess and address health literacy

Establish a daily routine to take medications

Use medication synchronization programs

Utilize pharmacy discount cards

Utilize adherence applications

Prescribe blister pack medications

Order 90-day prescriptions

More information on medication and care plan adherence is available at [cardi-oh.org/best-practices/patient-adherence](https://cardi-oh.org/best-practices/patient-adherence) and on Twitter [@cardioh](https://twitter.com/cardioh).

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