

Spotlight on Health Care



Don't Put Your Health—Or Your Future—At Risk

(NAPSA)—Not taking your medication as directed can have serious health consequences—it can reduce your quality of life and longevity and increase your chances of complications. The problem is more common than you might think. Nearly three out of four Americans do not always take their medications as directed—resulting in medicine-related hospitalizations and almost 125,000 deaths in the U.S. annually.

Fortunately, a new multiyear public education campaign, *Script Your Future*, has been created to help patients understand the importance of medication adherence, or taking medicine as directed. The campaign, led by the National Consumers League (NCL), the nation's oldest consumer group, aims to raise awareness among patients about the health consequences of not taking medication as directed. Sample questions and practical tools can be found on the website www.ScriptYourFuture.org to help patients start an important conversation with their health care professional about their medicine.

"There are many reasons why people don't take their medicine as directed, from concerns about side effects to the out-of-pocket costs of prescriptions. But the consequences for patients are the same. Poor adherence puts patients, especially those with chronic conditions, at risk for serious complications," said Sally Greenberg, executive director of NCL and lead organizer of the *Script Your Future* campaign.

The campaign recommends that patients ask the following:

- What's my medicine called and what does it do?
- How and when should I take it? And for how long?
- What if I miss a dose?
- Are there any side effects?



The Surgeon General, Dr. Regina Benjamin, joined with the National Consumers League to launch the *Script Your Future* national campaign.

- Is it safe to take it with other medicine or vitamins?
- Can I stop taking it if I feel better?

If patients still don't understand, they should let their doctor, nurse practitioner or pharmacist know and should not feel embarrassed about asking them to explain further. And if patients experience complications when taking a medication, they should not stop taking it without calling their health care professional first.

Research shows that many patients with chronic diseases often have a poor understanding of their condition, how their prescribed medication works and the consequences of not taking it. When patients understand their condition and how medication helps them manage it, they are more likely to be adherent.

Research conducted by *Script Your Future* and others indicates that patients and their doctors often do not talk about the medicine that has been prescribed. With nearly half of all Americans—and the number is growing—currently suffering from at least one chronic disease, it is more important than ever for doctors and patients to talk about taking medicine as directed.