

Senior Health News

Lack Of Medication Adherence Is A Serious Concern For Older Adults

(NAPSA)—Growing older means taking on new responsibilities and confronting new challenges to building a healthy lifestyle. For Americans age 65 and above, it may also include taking multiple medications to manage a variety of health conditions. In fact, a survey of 17,000 Medicare recipients found that 40 percent of patients reported taking five or more prescription medications.

The prevalence of chronic illness in an aging population underscores the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle, diet and prescribed medication regimen for managing these conditions. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that 80 percent of seniors are living with one chronic condition—such as diabetes, heart disease, arthritis or cancer—and about half have at least two. Still, studies have shown that many older Americans (between 40 and 75 percent) do not take their medications at the right time or in the right amount.

People may not get maximum benefit from their therapeutic plan unless they use medications as prescribed by, or as agreed upon with, the health care professional. Lack of medication adherence—not taking medication as prescribed—may contribute to worsening of disease, preventable death, unnecessary hospitalizations, and increased health care

According to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Consumer magazine, September 2003, many older Americans (between 40 and 75 percent) do not take their medications at the right time or in the right amount.



costs. These consequences can be serious but, fortunately, following your treatment regimens may reduce these risks.

Here are some tips to help seniors stay on track with their medication regimen:

At The Doctor's Office:

- **Write it down.** Ask your doctor to write down specific directions for taking your medicine. One study found that more than 60 percent of patients did not understand what their physicians told them about medication use immediately after receiving the information.

- **Bring someone with you.** Having a friend or family member in the doctor's office with you to listen, ask questions and lend support may be helpful.

On The Way Home:

- **Don't wait.** Fill your prescription immediately after leaving the doctor's office.

- **Ask the pharmacist.** Ask your pharmacist any questions about your medication that you didn't think of or feel comfortable asking while at the doctor's office.

At Home:

- **Organize!** Using pillboxes or other special medication holders to organize your medications by hour, day and week lets you easily see if you missed a day or a dose.

- **Organize!** Link taking your medications with a routine event, such as brushing your teeth, shaving or even calling the grandkids.

- **Organize!** Keep your medications in a familiar place—on a dresser or nightstand—so they are the first thing you see in the morning. If you have to take your medicine with meals, keep them in a safe location in the kitchen.

- **Make use of reminder tools.** Special "reminder" devices such as a vibrating watch, an automatic pill dispenser or a pager can help you remember when to take your medications.

- **Keep a checklist.** Use a checklist to make sure that you took your medicines each day, as directed.

- **Plan ahead.** To decrease your chance of missing a dose, give yourself enough time to refill your prescription before the current one runs out.

Above all else, remember that your health care professionals, family, caregivers and friends are there to help you, so don't be afraid, ashamed or embarrassed to ask questions or to ask for help.

This information is brought to you by AstraZeneca Pharmaceuticals LP.