



Your medication routine



As someone with heart failure you may need to take one or more medicines every day, and take medicines for other health conditions.

You may have been given a treatment plan that explains when and how you should take your medicines — some must be taken at particular times of day, some with and some without food, and so on. This can get a bit complicated!

Although it can be a challenge, it is extremely important that you stick to your treatment regime, including your medicines. Even so, we know that some people fail to take their medicines correctly, and there can be many reasons for this.



Forgetful?

Many people simply forget to take their medicines. If this sounds familiar, then the good news is that there are lots of things you can try, to help you remember.

We know that one of the most important thing you can do to remember your medicines, is to establish a regular routine. Developing a routine makes it much easier for you to stick with your treatment plan, so make that your first target^{4,5}.

A good way to reinforce your routine is to link the times you take your medicines, with other daily events such as meals or favourite TV shows. For example, if you always take one medicine when you have your lunch, then having lunch becomes a prompt to remind you to take that medicine.

Read on for some more tips on remembering to take your medicines.

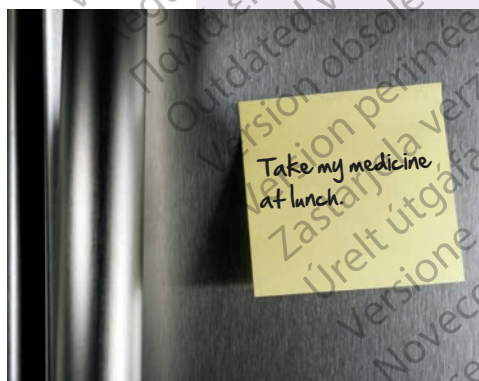
Here are some more tips you can try, if you tend to forget your medicines:

- **Keep your medicines somewhere visible.** That way you will be less likely to forget them.

- **Use a pillbox that has sections clearly marked for each day of the week, and in some cases for different times of day.** Pillboxes are often sold in pharmacies.



- You may find it helpful to **draw up a schedule or timetable of the medications you have to take in your diary**, with details of the times, doses and ways in which you have to take them. Put this somewhere prominent that you see often — perhaps on the door of your fridge.



- **Set up reminders for every dose of medicine you have to take, but have two reminders, rather than just one.** That way, if one reminder fails, or if you overlook it, you will still be reminded. It's a bit like the 'snooze' button on your alarm clock! Some people set up alarms on their mobile phone, others use a calendar or sticky notes that they put in places they visit often, such as the kitchen.
- **Ask a friend or family member to remind you to take your medicines.** As in the tip above, however, it is always best to have more than one reminder set up, so do use this in combination with something else.

- **You should also set up reminders that prompt you to request new prescriptions in good time, and get new supplies of your medicines before you run out.** This is particularly important if you are going to need new medicines when services are closed — such as at Christmas and New Year — or if you are going to need new medicines while away from home, for example if you are going on holiday.

If you are having trouble remembering to take your medicines, talk to your doctor.



Difficulties understanding treatment

Other people fail to stick with their treatment because they find it complicated, and they do not really understand why they have to take it². Some dislike, or are frightened of, side effects from their medicines.

People who do not really understand why they are taking medicines, are less likely to take them correctly. So if you are unsure why you take particular medicines, do have a chat with a member of your healthcare team, and be clear in your mind about the medicines you take and what they are for.

The same applies if you are experiencing side effects from your medicines, or if you are worried about potential side effects. Very often, these can be managed by exchanging your current medication for an equivalent, or by adjusting your treatment in some other way. Talk to your doctor about this.



People who do not really understand why they are taking medicines, are less likely to take them correctly.



Coping with feelings

We have also seen that people who are depressed, or isolated, are less likely to follow their medication routine. If this applies to you, please talk to a member of your healthcare team. There are lots of strategies that can be used to help you feel better, and a healthcare professional will be able to discuss these with you.

These matters are very important, because if you do not take your medicines correctly, you are much more likely to feel worse and to find yourself back in hospital³.

The good news is that there are plenty of things that you — and your doctor — can do to overcome problems that interfere with your medication routine, and get you back on track to managing your condition successfully.

People who are depressed, or isolated, are less likely to follow their medicine routine.





Remember, if you having problems taking your medicines, and find that none of these tips are helpful, talk to a member of your healthcare team.

Please also talk to them if you are confused about when and how to take your medicines, or if you are not sure what any of your medicines actually do. Healthcare professionals know that patients who understand their medicines are more likely to take them properly, so they will be very pleased that you asked!

If you happen to have an urgent medical concern, please call your doctor, go to your local emergency room, or call your local Emergency Contact number. Remember, your doctor is your primary source for information on your condition and treatment. Be sure to speak with them if you have any questions or concerns.

References

1. Aggarwal B, Pender A, Mosca L, Mochari-Greenberger H. Factors Associated with medication adherence amongst heart failure patients and their caregivers. *J Nurs Educ Pract* 2015; 5 (3): 22-27.
2. Sontakke S, Budania R, Bajait C, Jaiswal K, Pimpalkhute S. Evaluation of adherence to therapy in patients of chronic kidney disease. *Indian J Pharmacol* 2015 Nov-Dec; 47 (6): 668-71.
3. Kripalani S, Goggins K, Nwosu S, Schildcrout J, Mixon AS, McNaughton C, McDougall Scott AM, Wallston KA. Medication nonadherence before hospitalisation for acute cardiac events. *J Health Commun* 2015; 20 Suppl 2: 34-42.
4. Swanlund SL. Successful cardiovascular medication management processes as perceived by community-dwelling adults over age 74. *Appl Nurs Res* 2010 Feb; 23 (1): 22-29.
5. Wagner GJ, Ryan GW. Relationship between routinization of daily behaviors and medication adherence in HIV-positive drug users. *AIDS Patient Care STDS* 2004 Jul; 18 (7): 385-93.