

New Year's Resolution #1: I Will Take My Medicine

We're challenging you to make a New Year's resolution to take your medicine.

About half of all people prescribed medicine for a chronic health condition do not take the medicine on a regular basis. They have given up on believing it will ever help, are concerned about side effects or find the cost too high. A few just get tired of taking medicine.

While medicines may not be the answer for every chronic health problem, they can decrease symptoms and often prevent disease progression. But they only are effective if they are taken on a routine basis. Ironically, skipping medication doses also increases the chance of side effects.

Here are three easy steps towards making that resolution a reality.

Step 1: Get Informed

Understanding your medicines and health conditions is an important first step in taking medicine properly. Talk to your doctor and pharmacist about your medicines. **JustAskBlue.com** can help, too. We provide personalized responses to your questions about medicines and health.

Step 2: Make a Commitment

Taking medication on a long-term basis requires commitment. Consider the questions below to determine how committed you are to taking your medicines.

Do you believe the diagnosis?

If you don't believe the diagnosis, it's likely you won't take the medicine. To feel more confident in the diagnosis:

- Be sure to give a complete history of your health concerns
- Ask how your symptoms or test results relate to the diagnosis
- Ask questions; talk about your doubts
- Request written information about the illness and read it

Are you ready to take a prescription medicine?

Some people prefer treating health problems with dietary changes or herbal products before they take a prescription medicine. Let your doctor know your preferences and ask for suitable alternatives to prescription medicines. Pharmacists are a good resource for herbal product information and nutritionists can help with meal planning.

Are you confident that the medicine will work?

The FDA (U.S. Food and Drug Administration) requires that the percentage of people helped by a medicine be reported. Ask your doctor or pharmacist to share this information with you and to explain why the medicine might or might not be that effective for you. Ask about how long it takes to feel the full benefits of the medicine.

Are you worried about side effects or drug interactions?

The FDA requires that all potential side effects and their likelihood of occurring be reported. Ask your doctor or pharmacist for side effect information that considers your health conditions. They should also tell you how to prevent and/or treat side effects that might occur.

To avoid drug interactions, have your doctor and your pharmacist review all your medicines, including OTC and herbal products, so that harmful interactions can be avoided.

Are you worried about the cost of therapy?

The high costs of medicines are widely recognized so don't hesitate to make your concerns known. Effective, low-cost medicines are available for most common health conditions. For high cost medicines, coupons and even free prescriptions may be available.

Do you have family or friend support?

Does your family agree that you need treatment? Will a family member or friend help you to remember to take the medicine? Having a strong support system is important for you to stay committed to therapy.

Do you trust your health professional?

Having a trusting relationship with your health provider is key. Choosing a doctor and pharmacist that will listen to your concerns is important for you to feel confident that your therapy is appropriate and safe.

Step 3: Create a Plan

Committed to therapy is one thing, remembering to take a medicine is another. Below is a list of ways to help you remember to take your medicine. Try out the various methods to find one or two that work best for you.

- Take medicine at the same time each day.
- Pair medicine taking with a daily activity like eating breakfast or brushing your teeth.
- Use a pill container; this is especially helpful if you tend to forget whether or not you took a dose.
- Use a calendar to check off when you've taken a medicine.
- Keep pill containers in sight as a visual reminder.
- Get a small pillbox so it's easy to take medicines when away from home.
- Ask a family member or friend to remind you to take your medicines.
- Ask for medicines that only need to be taken once or twice a day.
- Use an alarm clock or timer to remind you to take doses.

Summary

Taking your medicine can be one of your most important New Year's resolutions. Keeping this resolution starts with getting informed, making a commitment, and creating a plan to help you stick with your regimen. Add in the support of your doctor, pharmacist, family and friends, and this resolution could lead to a healthy new you!