

Medication Adherence and Compliance



**National
STROKE
Association™**

Taking stroke-related
medications on time
and as directed



Adherence and Compliance

How are medication “adherence” and “compliance” different?

It's important to understand the difference between medication adherence and medication compliance. Medication **adherence** is the act of filling new prescriptions or refilling prescriptions on time. Medication **compliance** is the act of taking medication on schedule or taking medication as prescribed.



Why are medication adherence and compliance so important?

According to the National Council on Patient Information and Education, “Lack of medication adherence is **America’s other drug problem.**” Poor medication adherence can lead to:

- Unnecessary disease progression and complications
- Reduced functional abilities and quality of life
- An additional \$2,000 per year in medical costs and physician visits
- Increased use of expensive, specialized medical resources
- Unneeded medication changes

Medication noncompliance can also lead to hospital stays—the average length of stay due to medication noncompliance is 4.2 days. In the United States, 12 percent of people don’t take their medication at all after they fill/buy the prescription.

Reasons for Non-Compliance

Why are non-adherence and non-compliance so common?

There are a number of reasons why people do not adhere or comply with their medication regimen. The chart below lists common factors that interfere with medication adherence and compliance.

Social/economic-related factors

- Age and race
- Economic status
- Medication cost

Survivor-related factors

- Forgetfulness
- Treatment anxiety
- Misunderstood instructions
- Fear of becoming dependent on medication

Medication-related factors

- Length of treatment
- Complexity of treatment
- Unwanted side effects

Condition-related factors

- Other conditions
- Level of disability
- Severity of the condition

Improve Medication Adherence and Compliance

Help your healthcare professionals help you

It is absolutely necessary to help your healthcare professionals create an accurate profile of your medication use. Take an active role and tell your healthcare professional and pharmacist about your experiences with your medications. Be vocal, and don't leave any information out. Share any suggestions and/or changes you have, and be sure to follow up and let them know how you're feeling after any changes in medication. Remember—you are the patient. Healthcare professionals are there to help *you*.

Reduce cost barriers

If you can't afford to take your medication, it doesn't matter how good that medication is. There are steps you can take to help reduce the financial burden. Talk with your pharmacist, and use generics when available. Also ask about discount programs and any Patient Assistance Programs that may be available from the drug manufacturer. Ask about value-based insurance design, which may reduce copays.

Improve Medication Adherence and Compliance (cont.)

Address your own behaviors


Form good habits

There are good habits you can form when dealing with your medication. Make sure that you are informed about your condition(s) as well as why you are taking your medication(s). Be honest about your preferences, limitations and priorities. Talk with your healthcare professionals, and follow up with them with any questions or concerns you may have.

Stick with one pharmacy

It's important to remember that medication is not a convenience item—do not hop from pharmacy to pharmacy. Instead, form a relationship with one pharmacy. Get to know the staff and let the staff get to know you and your family and/or caregivers.

Make sure that you ask a lot of questions. If your pharmacist does not answer your questions to your satisfaction, then it is time to look elsewhere for your medications.



Also, make sure that your healthcare professional knows where you get your prescriptions filled. Your pharmacist and healthcare professional must work together to ensure safe treatment for you and your condition.

Use tools to help remember medications

There are many helpful tricks and tools that you can use so that you remember your medications. Set reminders on your phone or alarm clock to remind you when your dose is due. Use pill boxes to organize your medicines.

Medication trackers—like the one at the end of this brochure—can be very useful. Utilize them to write down each medication you take and how you take it. Write down how each medication makes you feel as well. Make sure that your family and caregivers know and understand your tracking system so they are able to explain it to your healthcare professionals in the event of an emergency.

Explaining Stroke-Related Medications

With so many stroke-related medications available, remembering each medication and what it does can be confusing. Use the chart below as a reference to help keep your medications straight.

Drug Class (Brand Names)	What They Do
Anticoagulants (Heparin [®] , Pradaxa [®] , Coumadin [®] , Xarelto [®])	Reduce the risk of blood clots and prevent existing blood clots from getting bigger by thinning the blood
Antiplatelets (Plavix [®] , Aggrenox [®] , Persantine [®] , Ticlid [®])	Prevent platelets (blood cells) from sticking together
Angiotensin II receptor antagonists (Micardis [®] , Cozaar [®] , Hyzaar [®])	Block angiotensin II, a chemical that triggers muscle contraction around blood vessels, narrowing them. By inhibiting the chemical, blood vessels can enlarge and blood pressure is reduced.

GABA (gamma-Amino butyric acid) receptor antagonists

(Kemstro™, Gablofen®, Lioresal®)

Inhibit the action of GABA, which inhibits neurotransmitters and regulates the nervous system

Miscellaneous central nervous system agents

(Nuedexta™)

Affect physiological and psychological processes in the central nervous system

Neurotoxins

(Botox®)

Interact with proteins in nerves to relax muscles

Statins (Lipitor®, Crestor®, Zocor®, Mevacor®, Lescol®)

Lower cholesterol by inhibiting the enzyme in the blood that produces cholesterol in the liver

Thrombolytics

(Activase®)

Break up blood clots

Warning Signs

Learn the many warning signs of a stroke. Act **FAST** and **CALL 9-1-1 IMMEDIATELY** at any sign of a stroke. Use **FAST** to remember warning signs:

F

FACE: Ask the person to smile. Does one side of the face droop? _____

A

ARMS: Ask the person to raise both arms. Does one arm drift downward? _____

S

SPEECH: Ask the person to repeat a simple phrase. Is their speech slurred or strange? _____

T

TIME: If you observe any of these signs, call 9-1-1 immediately. _____

NOTE THE TIME WHEN ANY SYMPTOMS FIRST APPEAR. If given within *three hours* of the first symptom, there is an FDA-approved clot-buster medication that may reduce long-term disability for the most common type of stroke.

LEARN ABOUT MORE SUDDEN SIGNS OF STROKE AT

www.stroke.gov

of Stroke



e.org/symp

National Stroke Association's mission is to reduce the incidence and impact of stroke by developing compelling education and programs focused on prevention, treatment, rehabilitation and support for all impacted by stroke.

A stroke is a brain attack that occurs when a blood clot blocks an artery or a blood vessel breaks, interrupting blood flow to an area of the brain. Brain cells begin to die.

**CALL 9-1-1 IMMEDIATELY IF
YOU SEE ONE OR MORE SIGNS
OF A STROKE.**



1-800-STROKES
(787-6537)

www.stroke.org

Supported by a contribution from AstraZeneca.
All publications are reviewed by National
Stroke Association's Publications Committee.

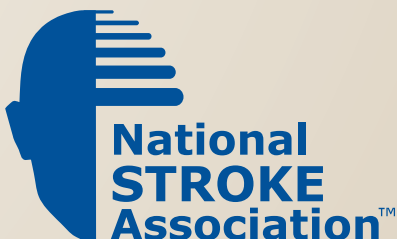
© 2012 National Stroke Association
2/12 BG13

Your Medications

Taking medications as prescribed is central to recovery post-stroke and recurrent stroke prevention. Tear out this form and bring it to your healthcare professional's office. Use the Medication Tracker on the reverse side to write down each medication you take and how you take it.

Questions to Ask Your Healthcare Professional/Pharmacist

- What is the medicine's name, what is it for, and what does it look like?
- When and how do I take this medicine?
- What are the possible side effects?
- When should I expect the medicine to start working?
- What do I do if I forget my dose?
- What are the repercussions if I stop taking this medicine altogether?
- Besides time of day, is there anything else I should know about taking my meds (e.g., on a full stomach, with milk, drug interactions, etc.)?



Keep Track of Your Medications

One of the best ways to manage your medications is stay organized with a medication tracker. List each medication and how you take it below, and share this information with your friends, family and caregivers.

Medication Name	Dosage	Morning	Mid-Day	After- Noon	Night	How Medication Makes Me Feel	Comments