



## Common Barriers to Medication Adherence

What Patients Might Say	Possible Solutions
My medicine makes me feel sick.	Prescribe a substitute medication; suggest ways to manage or reduce side effects; change the dose.
I feel fine.	Explain how the patient's disease affects the body and use teach-back to ensure your patient understands.
I forget.	<p><i>Forget to take:</i> Suggest reminders such as a pill box or cell phone alarm; simplify the regimen if possible; provide information on PillPack*; suggest pharmacist counseling.</p> <p><i>Forget to refill:</i> Write a longer prescription; suggest a pharmacy refill reminder or auto-refill system.</p>
I can't afford my medicine. I only take half a pill a day to save money.	Prescribe generics when possible; offer information about prescription assistance programs and less costly sources of medications.
There are so many pills. I can't keep them straight! It's too complicated.	Consider switching to once-a-day or combination therapy; simplify the regimen if possible; suggest pharmacist counseling; determine if any medications can be safely discontinued.
I can't understand these instructions.	Use plain language indications on the prescription so plain language appears on the label; use teach-back to ensure your patient understands; use color-coded stickers to indicate dosing; use visual aids; suggest pharmacist counseling.
I can't get to the pharmacy.	Try to determine and address the source of the access issue; suggest mail order options.
I travel to my home country for months.	Write a longer prescription; suggest mail order options.

\*A pharmacy delivery system that pre-sorts and packages medications, with each package labeled with the date and time to take the medications.

**Source:** Starr B, Sacks R. Improving Outcomes for Patients With Chronic Disease: The Medication Adherence Project (MAP). Toolkit and Training Guide for Primary Care Providers and Pharmacists. New York, NY: NYC Health, Cardiovascular Disease Prevention and Control Program, Bureau of Chronic Disease Prevention and Control; 2010.