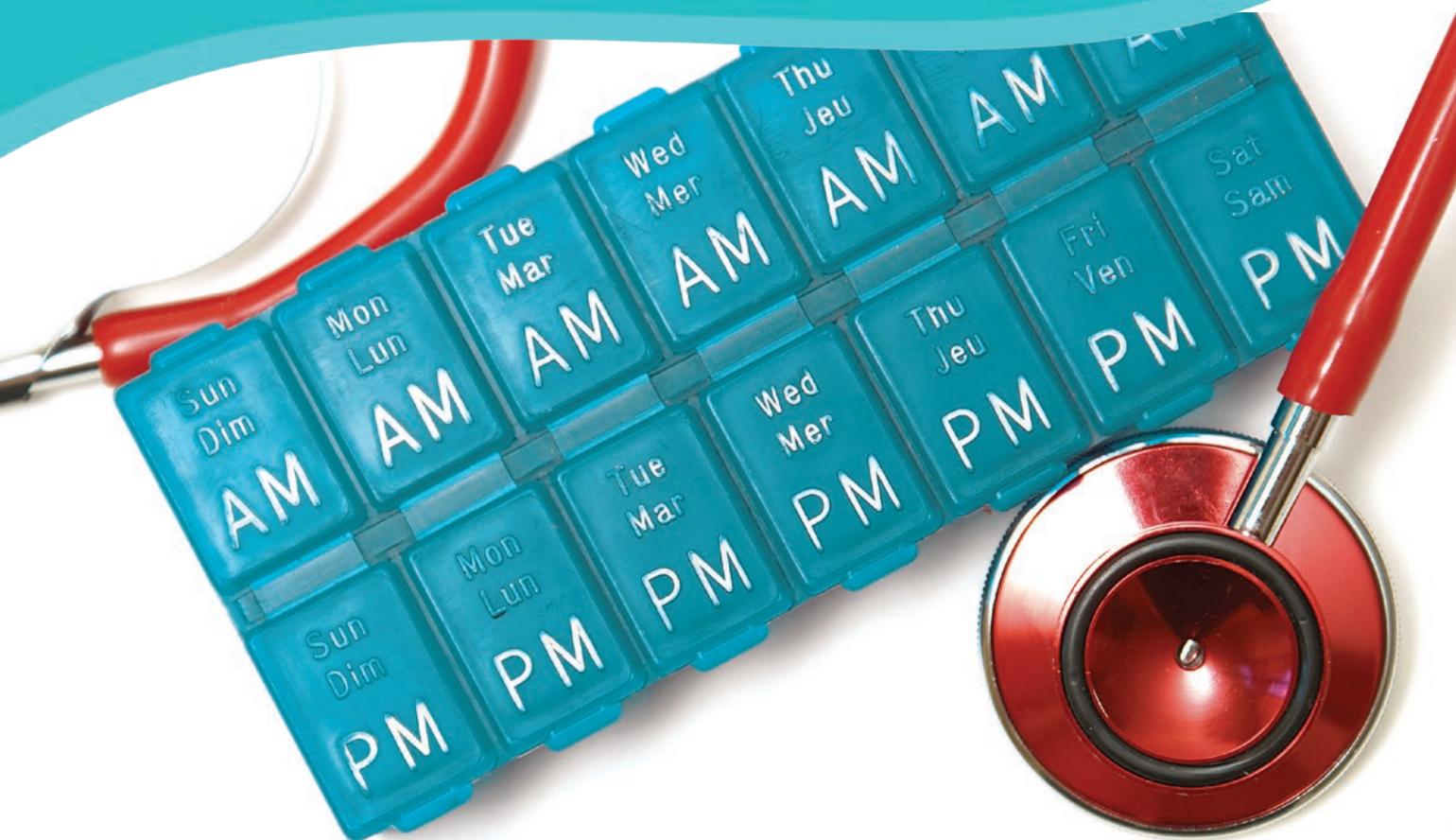


Medication Adherence and Compliance



Mended Hearts™

Table of Contents

Medication Adherence and Compliance.	4
Why Medication Adherence and Compliance Matters.	4
How to Take Your Medicines Safely	5
How to Read a Medicine Label	6
Medication Safety	6
Get Help Paying for Your Medicine.	6

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Guiding Your Way

Throughout this *Patient Resource Guide*, use these interactive features to add to your learning experience:



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Medication Adherence and Compliance

The medicines prescribed to you by your physician are proven to make a significant difference in helping heart patients recover and maintain cardiovascular health. It is extremely important to take the medications exactly as directed.

Failure to follow instructions in taking medications is a nationwide problem with a terrible cost. Every year, many heart patients have to be readmitted to the hospital following a cardiovascular event simply because they didn't take their medications as instructed. These readmissions are not only expensive for patients, but they increase the risks for even more cardiovascular events in the future, as well as the risk of fatality. According to the American Pharmacists Association (APA), around 125,000 people die each year from the results of failing to take their medicines as prescribed. According to the APA's Task Force for Compliance, the financial burden on the nation is also considerable, at \$100 billion in total costs. These are just two of the biggest reasons why it is very important that you follow your doctor's instructions about taking your medicines to the letter.

Remember, you want your medications to be as effective as they possibly can be. The table on page 33 outlines the U.S. Food & Drug Administration's recommendations for taking your medicines as directed.

Why Medication Adherence and Compliance Matters

There are a number of extremely beneficial medications that are proven to make a significant difference in helping heart patients recover and maintain cardiovascular health. After your cardiovascular event has been treated, your doctor may prescribe one or more such medications for you.

In order for you to get the best possible results from your medicines, it is very important that you take them exactly as your doctor prescribes, otherwise known as "medication adherence and compliance."

Medication adherence and compliance includes:

- Getting your prescription filled on time
- Taking your medication according to all the instructions that appear on the medicine label
- Keeping your doctor informed about how you're feeling while taking the medication
- Getting the prescription refilled on time

Medication adherence and compliance is important to your recovery after a heart event, along with eating a heart-healthy diet and getting plenty of exercise, according to your doctor's instructions. It's true that the medications can be expensive. But it's important to remember that even expensive medications are much more affordable than the costs of hospitalization.



How to Take Your Medicines Safely

Action	What to Do
Talk with your doctor, pharmacist or other healthcare professionals.	Take a complete, up-to-date list of all the medicines (prescription and over-the-counter) you currently take to share every time you visit the doctor's office or hospital.
	Be sure to tell your healthcare professionals about any allergies or other sensitivities you have, if you are pregnant or nursing, or if you are considering having a child.
	Don't be afraid to ask your doctor what you need to know.
Know your medicines, both prescription and over-the-counter.	Get familiar with both the name brand and the generic names of each, what they look like, how to store them properly and how to use them.
	Ask your doctor or pharmacist what you should expect from the drug, including what known side effects or interactions you need to be aware of.
	Find out how long to take your medications, what times of day to take each one and whether to take each one with or without food.
Read the label and follow directions.	Talk to your doctor or pharmacist to make sure you understand the directions.
	Keep your medicines in their original containers, as much as possible.
	Double-check that you're taking the right medication each time you take it.
	Take the medicine exactly as directed. If you have any difficulty with the medication, talk to your doctor as soon as possible.
Avoid interactions.	Find out if there are any known interactions between your medication and other medications or dietary supplements, food or beverages.
	Try to use the same pharmacy for all your medicines, as much as possible.
Monitor your medicine's effects, and the effects of other products that you use.	Ask your doctor how long you will take your medication before you notice an improvement.
	Ask your doctor or pharmacist if there are any ways you can minimize the risk of side effects and what to do if you experience side effects.
	Pay close attention to how your medications make you feel. If you notice any side effects, write them down and take your notes to your doctor, pharmacist or other healthcare professional.

Medication Adherence and Compliance

How to Read a Medicine Label

The label on your medication bottle contains some very important information for your healthcare team (including your pharmacist) and you. To get the full benefit from your medications, you need to understand the information on your medication labels.

Prescription medication labels vary in appearance, but in general, any medicine label will tell you some basic facts about the medicine. Those facts will typically include:

- The name, address and phone number of the pharmacy that filled the prescription
- The name of the prescribing physician
- What the medication is (either labeled by name brand or the generic name)
- The dosage
- Storage instructions
- Instructions for when and how often to take the medication

Some labels may also have warning labels about drugs, food or drink that may interact with this medication, and whether there are activities or situations to avoid while using the medication. Make sure you understand all the instructions that appear on the label, so that you will take the medication exactly as the doctor prescribed.

Medication Safety

Remember, you want your medications to be as effective as they possibly can be. Try to take your medications at the same times every day. Getting into this habit will help you remember to take all your medications every time you're supposed to.

Look at your prescription before you have it filled to make sure it is correct. Pay special attention to the name, dose and when and how often the doctor tells you to take the medicine. Once your prescription is filled, check it before you leave the pharmacy to be sure it was filled correctly.

Be sure to store your medications properly. Many medicines require a cool, dry place out of sunlight. Also, keep your medications stored where they are out of reach for children and pets.

Get Help Paying for Your Medicine

One of the most common reasons why people don't take their medications as they should is the expense. This can be a real problem for people who've survived heart events, as medication is usually a critically important part of their care and recovery. For people who have trouble affording their medications, there is good news: Help is available.

Some supermarket or retail chain store pharmacies offer discount cards or low-cost monthly generic medications at a price that is lower than some health plan co-pays. Check the pharmacy's Web site and ask your doctor or pharmacist if you could benefit. Many



For more information, visit us at

www.mendedhearts.org

or call us at **1-888-HEART99**.

You can also write to us at:

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