

WELLNESS WORKS

Special points of interest

- Preventable diseases make up about 70% of all illnesses
- The value of lost productivity, wages and other economic losses has been estimated at \$50 to \$77 billion per year
- If you can't afford your medications, there is help.

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MEDICINE ADHERENCE

FIND MOTIVATION WITH EMPLOYEE WELLNESS PROGRAMS

"Drugs don't work in patients who don't take them."

— Former Surgeon General C. Everett Koop, MD

Approximately one third of all prescriptions are never filled, and over half of prescriptions that are filled are not taken as prescribed in the United States. This rate of non-adherence includes patients taking drugs for serious conditions such as asthma, high blood pressure and diabetes. According to primary care physicians, the health of one in five patients is compromised by non-adherence. The consequence of poor adherence to medications is a critical issue that impacts your health and productivity. But understanding your medication can mean the difference between suffering and relief.

Get with the Program

Your doctor should be your primary source of information when learning about your medication. An open dialogue with your physician allows you to ask questions and to share your concerns. Simply asking about a generic or over-the-counter alternative to a prescription might also help you control cost. If you do not have a regular practitioner, your health plan provider can recommend a physician in your local area.

Build a relationship of trust with your pharmacists or pharmaceutical technicians, especially if you see more than one doctor or specialist. They can answer your questions about dosage and warn you of any possible drug interactions.



Don't hesitate to discuss over-the-counter medications or dietary habits that might interact with your medication.

Never take a medication without reading its labels and the associated material. Know the dosage information, what time the medication needs to be taken and any side effects that might occur. If you miss a dose or experience an adverse reaction to your medication, contact your physician or pharmacist immediately. Don't stop taking a medication until the course of treatment is fulfilled or a medical professional instructs you to do so.

See the Benefits

Non-adherence is associated with 125,000 deaths and 10% of all hospitalizations annually. Many chronic conditions can be effectively controlled with medications, yet poor adherence among these patients can result in higher rates of heart disease and other serious and costly medical conditions.

Non-adherence costs upwards of \$100 billion in medical care per year in the United States. In addition to health care costs, the value of lost pro-

ductivity, wages and other economic losses has been estimated at \$50 to \$77 billion per year.

If you can't afford your medications, there is help. There are several nationwide prescription assistance programs such as the Partnership for Prescription Assistance that provides prescription medicine for free or nearly free. Please call 1-888-4PPA-NOW (1-888-477-2669) or go to www.pparx.org for more information on these important programs.

Participating in a medicine adherence wellness program through your employer can help you understand the importance of medicine adherence and lend you the support you need to take medications correctly.

Preventable diseases make up about 70% of all illnesses in the United States. This greatly impacts the cost of health care. Chronic and preventable illnesses are often related to lifestyle choices such as not taking medications as prescribed. The good news is that employees want to improve their health. Participation in wellness programs is increasing as employees take personal steps to battle rising health care costs.

For more information on medicine adherence, please visit www.nahueducationfoundation.org.

Taking advantage of programs offered by your employer can have a major impact.



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