

How to start and sustain a medication adherence routine

Correct and consistent use of medications over a long period of time is very important for maintaining good health, achieving treatment outcomes and preventing both short- and long-term complications of type 2 diabetes.

Here are strategies to start and sustain correct and consistent use of medications over a life-course.

Understand what and how the medication is used: discuss with your doctor, pharmacist, diabetes educator and coach on the usefulness of the medication, how it works and the correct dose and timing for taking the medication. Also discuss the cost of medications and where to get them with your clinical team. This will prevent the doctor from prescribing drugs that are too expensive for you to buy or not available in the nearest pharmacy. Also discuss the possible side effects of the medication and how to report this to the doctor. Also discuss about other drugs you are taking and possible allergies you may have

Monitor and report side effects: As soon as a medication is prescribed, read about the side effect. This information is always included as a leaflet inside the pack of the medication. When you start taking the medication, observe side effects. Report these side effects to the doctor and discuss on how to change the medication to another one that has less side effects

Plan to buy and sustain supply of the medication: this begins with quantifying how much of the medication you will need daily, weekly and monthly. Compare this to your income and allocate a budget for procuring the medication. Locate the nearest pharmacy where the medication can be bought. Then plan on how to get refills when needed. Choose a certain day in the week or month to buy medications. Put this in your calendar and set a reminder. If possible, arrange with the community pharmacy on how to refill these medications regularly.

Remember to take medication on time: choose a certain time during the day that is convenient for you to take your medication. Take the medication at the same time everyday. You can link this to something you do every day for example, bathing, brushing teeth or going to bed. Check if the medication should be taken before or after meals. Also check if the medication can be taken on an empty or full stomach. Use pill boxes, calendar reminders or digital reminders to help you to remember when and how to take your medications. Plan to take enough medications when travelling and place it where you can reach it like a hand bag. Avoid checking in medications. When experiencing a stressful life event, discuss with friends and family to support and remind you to take your medications. Always have a supply of your medications in your handbag so that a sudden change in routine like an unplanned outing will not prevent you from taking medications as scheduled.

Even the best plans do not go as planned. So you might still forget sometimes. If you forget to take the medication, please do not take a make-up or double dose the next time you are remember to take medications. This is dangerous

Avoid taking multiple pills for the same condition: if you realize that the doctor has prescribed more than one type of drugs for type 2 diabetes, discuss with the doctor or the pharmacist on the

feasibility of using one pill that contains the two drugs. Also discuss on the feasibility of using forms of the drug that will last longer through the day or even for months. This will reduce the quantity that needs to be taken daily to the barest minimum.