

Understanding medication adherence

Glucose lowering medications can only achieve the desired treatment results when they are taken correctly and regularly according to how they are prescribed by the clinical team. This is called medical adherence. This involves taking the correct dose of the medication prescribed, at the correct time prescribed all or most of the time.

Most people find it difficult to do this. Failure to take drugs as prescribed on a regular basis will lead to poor blood sugar control, frequent occurrence of acute emergencies and this will lead to frequent hospitalizations and higher risk of developing complications. In the long run, it raise the cost of treatment.

Not adhering to medications can happen for several reasons that are either intentional or non-intentional.

- Intentional non-adherence happens when the patient decides by their own will not to take the medications as prescribed. In this case these reasons are within the control of the patient. Some reasons for intentionally not adhering to medications include:
 - **Poor understanding about medication:** sometimes, patient do not understand the treatment goals, how the medications work and how the medications should be taken
 - **Cost of medications:** when the medications are more expensive than a patient can afford, they may decide to stop buying the medication
 - **Side effects:** when patients have unpleasant experiences that are linked to the medication they are taking; they are likely to stop taking the medication
 - **Not aware of the risks because there are no physical signs of complications:** patients may decide to stop taking the medication because they do not experience any signs and symptoms of the complications. They are not aware that it takes time for the complications or acute illness to occur.
 - **Religious influences:** Patients may stop taking medications for reasons that are related to their faith. Some religious organizations do not allow their members to take medications. Some patients think that they need to rely on God to get treated or healed and so do not need medications.
 - **Cultural influences:** Some patients may rely on cultural practices and alternatives such as herbs, Ayurveda etc to get treated. So, they will not take the prescribed medications
 - **Misinformation from peers and family:** Sometimes, patients may be told myths, misconceptions and misinformation about medications and their use. This will make them to stop taking their medications.
 - **Serious compulsion to prevent complications:** sometimes people take more drugs than required when they want to avoid complications. This is very dangerous and should be avoided.
- Non-intentional adherence happens when a patient forgets or is unable to take their medications as prescribed for reasons beyond their control. This may be due to:

- **Forgetfulness:** patients may forget to take their medications. This may be due to impairments with memory
- **Sudden change in routine:** when there is an unplanned event like a sudden trip, outing with friends etc can make a patient to suddenly forget to take medications
- **Stressful life-changing events:** Stressful events such as a job loss, an accident, loss of a loved one can make a patient to suddenly stop taking their medications
- **Travel:** patients are likely to forget to their medications when travelling
- **Unavailability of medications:** sometimes, the medications are not available or places to buy the medication is far and out of reach from the patient