

Taking Cholesterol Medication Every Day

Why It's Important, Tips for Remembering

How many times have you “forgotten” to brush your teeth or wash your face? Most of us rarely skip these daily habits because they are part of our routine. In the same way, taking your cholesterol medication as prescribed should become part of your daily routine. Otherwise, you may not achieve the full benefit of therapy.

Unfortunately, not taking medication exactly as prescribed is very common—and can be dangerous to your health. Consider these statistics from the American Heart Association.

- Two thirds of all Americans don't take any or all of their prescription medicines
- Ten percent of all hospital admissions are due to people not taking prescription medications correctly



“Take As Directed”— Take It Seriously

Why is it so important to take your cholesterol medication just as your doctor prescribes? The answer is, “your health.” If not taken as directed, your medication may not work. In addition, you could experience side effects—and they could be minor or major. You could even make yourself feel sick.

Are you following your doctor’s recommendations closely, including directions for taking your cholesterol medicine? If so, you’re doing a great job of what healthcare professionals call “adherence.” That just means you’re taking the professionals’ advice, whether it’s about eating right and getting more exercise, or quitting smoking or taking medications. If your adherence isn’t so great, you have lots of company. Answer these quick questions truthfully to quiz your adherence.

How’s Your Cholesterol Medication Adherence?

1. Do you ever forget to take your medication?
2. Have you ever run out of pills because you didn’t refill your prescription?
3. Does your medicine cabinet hold old prescription bottles that still have pills inside?
4. Do you ever stop taking a medication because you feel better?
5. Are you unsure about what medicines you’re taking and why you’re taking them?
6. Do you know what side effects you might expect from your prescribed medicine—and what to do if they occur?

A “yes” answer to any of these questions means that you need some help to be more medicine-adherent.

Need Help Remembering Your Cholesterol Medicine? Try These Tips...

Since it's so important to take your cholesterol medication properly, take advantage of these tips to help you remember...and help you help yourself.

- Be consistent—Take your medicine at the same time every day
- Try teamwork—Take your medicine along with a daily meal, or team it with other daily activities like brushing your teeth
- Think “in the box”—Put pills in a divided pillbox marked for the days of the week (your local drugstore probably carries them)
- Speak up—Ask people close to you to help you remember to take your medication
- Check yourself—Keep a small calendar near your medicine. Each time you take your dosage, make a check mark
- Go the “write” way—Write yourself a reminder note and attach it to your medicine cabinet or refrigerator

Your Own Good Health: A Lifelong Commitment

While there is no cure or “quick fix” for high cholesterol, it can be managed successfully. Whatever cholesterol-lowering medication you take, take it exactly as your doctor prescribes. Many medicines prescribed for high cholesterol must be taken *every day*.

Once cholesterol is down to recommended levels, you must *stay* on your medication (and stay with healthy eating and exercise habits) for long-term success. If you stop your treatment, your cholesterol will quickly climb back up to the level it was before you began your cholesterol-lowering program.



Remember

Take your cholesterol-lowering medication *exactly* as your doctor prescribes. Otherwise, you might not do your health any good—and you could cause yourself harm. Successful cholesterol management is a lifelong commitment to your own good health.