

Families have an important part to play in helping a family member take prescribed medication.

Your family member will more likely take prescribed medication when he/she:

- Has support at home that is non-judgmental.
- Sees how medication is helping to manage unwanted symptoms.
- Connects taking medication with reaching personal goals.
- Has a good relationship with health care providers.
- Can remember to get the prescription filled and take the medication.
- Has financial support to cover medication costs.

Remember:

- Recovery takes time. Stay positive. Be hopeful.
- Be an ally or partner to your family member.
- Point out the positive things in your family member's life
- Small steps can lead to big changes.
- Let your family member know you think they can make changes.
- Remind your family member of the progress he/she has made.

About this Project:

Families are an important part of a person's recovery and well-being. The Schizophrenia & Community Integration Service (SCIS) are committed to strengthening the role of families at each step of a person's recovery. This brochure was developed by family members and healthcare professionals and is one in a series of six including:

1. Caregivers – How Are You?
2. Managing Relapse
3. Communicating with Health Care Professionals
4. Encouraging Medication Adherence
5. Fostering Independence
6. Goal Setting – How To Help?

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Supporting the Supporters

Schizophrenia & Community
Integration Service



Encouraging Medication Adherence

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Why Does My Family Member Not Take Prescribed Medications?

There are several reasons why your family member may not take prescribed medication. You may hear your family member say the following:

- 1. Unawareness/ Denial of Illness:**
“I don’t have a mental illness” or
“I do not need medication”.
- 2. Negative Relationship with Treatment Team:** “I don’t trust my doctor; they do not know what they are talking about”.
- 3. Beliefs Toward Medication:** “I’ve been told that medications are toxic and I should not take them”.
- 4. Autonomy and Control:** “You can’t tell me what to do” or “I am not taking medication anymore”.
- 5. Side Effects of Medication:**
“I feel worse on this medication”,
“I can’t think straight on this drug!”,
“I feel like I am in a fog all of the time”.

How Can You Help?

- Try to listen without making a judgment. Just listen.
- Avoid trying to convince your family member that he/she has a mental illness.
- Avoid fighting about taking medications.
- Encourage your family member to talk with the health care team about medication side effects.
- Be sensitive to how your family member feels about taking medications.
- Understand that it is not easy to take medications.
- Praise your family member for sticking to the medication schedule.
- Focus on the benefits of taking medications.
- Avoid punishing or scolding your family member for not taking medication.
- Acknowledge the distress of the side effects.
- Assist in finding ways to cope with possible side effects.

Try Saying:

- “You are right. You don’t have to take the medication. What do you think will happen if you keep taking it? What will happen if you stop?”
- “You are right. All medications have side effects. Let’s look at how the medication has helped you and how to minimize the side effects”.
- “You seem to be able to focus more since you started taking the medication. What do you think?”
- “Some people use phone apps/ alarm clocks to remind them to take their meds. What do you think will help you remember?”
- “What about making a list for the doctor of all the concerns you have about taking medications? You can take it with you to your next appointment”.
- Some people take medications at meal time/bedtime to help them remember to take them, when do you think would be a good time for you?

- Taking prescribed medications is an important part of recovery from schizophrenia.
- Prescribed medications can manage unwanted symptoms and help prevent a relapse.