

# IMPROVING MEDICATION ADHERENCE: QUESTIONS FOR YOUR PATIENTS WITH DEPRESSION



We are committed to providing practical tools to help you improve patient care. This tool contains questions for you to ask patients to help improve medication adherence. Asking the initial general questions will assist you to:

- Assess whether your patients are taking their medication correctly
- Identify obstacles to their therapy
- Help your patients to identify and overcome obstacles to medication adherence

The second portion of this document provides questions about adherence and barriers specific to your patients with depression. If your patients provide yes or no answers, follow up to obtain a more detailed response.

It is recommended that you keep a copy of this completed medication adherence sheet in your patient's medical file for future reference.

## Medication Issues

Let's start with a few basic questions so we can make sure you're moving toward your treatment goals.

- What medications are you prescribed? Of the medications you are prescribed, are you able to take them all?
- What vitamins or herbal supplements do you take? What supplements should you NOT take with your prescribed medications?
- Why do you take these medications (e.g., what condition do they treat)?
- Do you experience any difficulties taking your medications as directed (e.g., dosage, frequency, time of day, with or without food)?
- Do you feel your medication is working?

## Support Tools

- Do you use a reminder to take your medication each day? If yes, does it help? If no, why not?
- What should you do if you miss a dose or forget to take your medication?

**Based on your patient's responses, work with them to establish a reminder system and/or provide your patient with a medication diary.**

## Related Factors

- Have you experienced any side effects of the medication? If yes, what are they and have they prevented you from taking your medication?
- Do you have an insurance plan to help you pay for your medication? Do you ever not fill a prescription or skip a dose because of cost?

## Depression Issues<sup>1-4</sup>

Keep in mind that each patient is different; however, asking questions around the following issues/areas may help you uncover barriers to adherence among your patients with depression:

- Side effects
- Expense of medication
- Comorbidities
- Attitude toward medication

## Sample Questions

- How do you feel about being on long-term therapy?
- Has your health care provider talked to you about how soon your medication will work?
- Do you ever forget to take your medication?
- Have you ever stopped taking your medication because you began to feel better? Feel worse?
- Have you ever experienced withdrawal symptoms from not taking your medication as directed (e.g., nausea, dizziness, and mood swings)?

## Notes

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**References:** 1. Brown C, Battista DR, Bruehlman R, Sereika SS, Thase ME, Dunbar-Jacob J. Beliefs about antidepressant medications in primary care patients: relationship to self-reported adherence. *Med Care.* 2005;43:1203-1207. 2. Lin EHB, Von Korff M, Katon W, et al. The role of the primary care physician in patients' adherence to antidepressant therapy. *Med Care.* 1995;33:67-74. 3. Aina Y, Susman JL. Understanding comorbidity with depression and anxiety disorders. *J Am Osteopath Assoc.* 2006;106:S9-S14. 4. American Society on Aging and American Society of Consultant Pharmacists Foundation. Adult medication: improving medication adherence in older adults. [www.adultmedication.com](http://www.adultmedication.com). Accessed July 15, 2011.

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