

# Tips to Promote Patient Adherence

## **Emphasize the “Why”**

Consuming a pill without truly understanding the current or future benefit it provides can diminish the motivation to adhere to the regimen. Ensuring patients understand the purpose of their medications empowers them to be involved in their own care, allows them to independently recognize the importance, and encourages a willingness to follow the guidance we provide. To emphasize the “shared” in shared decision-making, it is crucial to instill within patients the sense of choice, control, and active participation in their own care.

## **Identify Patient-Specific Barriers**

There are resources to help mitigate obstacles standing between a patient and their prescription. For access issues – copay assistance cards, medication assistance programs, prescription transfers to nearby pharmacies, and equivalent alternative therapies preferred through insurance exist to help. For memory or time-related issues – auto-refills, mail order, outreach calls, converting prescriptions to 90- and 100- day supplies, encouraging pillboxes, and utilizing phone alarms and applications are all options to explore. Fixing an issue begins with exposing one. At every appointment, whether it is in clinic or virtually, ask how things are going, and be prepared with solutions when the response is suboptimal.

## **Be Honest**

Scary things can happen when health issues remain uncontrolled. Maintaining a shame and blame free routine and being transparent with patients about the downstream risks of not taking their medications can be the difference between flighty refills and steady adherence. We share the desire to avoid poor outcomes for our patients, so reminding them of the reality while avoiding scolding can be the necessary wake-up call. Side effects can also be worrisome, and you want to make sure to beat the internet search. Providing information about potential adverse effects and offering guidance on how to manage the side effects can actualize and improve the patient's experience of taking their medication. If time is a barrier to having a thorough discussion about medications, consider involving your clinic's pharmacist team in this discussion.