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FOR THE FRIDGE

Tips for Managing Medications

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WHETHER WE JOT THINGS DOWN IN DAY PLANNERS OR ON STICKY NOTES, LIFE GETS BUSY.

Dealing with AD/HD—your own or your child’s—can get complicated, no matter which useful organizational system you build into your daily routine. If your life includes medications to alleviate AD/HD symptoms, a system of utmost importance is one that helps you manage those medications properly.

First, a word about side effects

If you notice side effects from any medication, contact your prescribing healthcare professional.

Daily for children and adolescents

Discuss the best medication and dosage timing with your child’s physician. Once these questions have been answered, design a daily routine according to the child’s needs and abilities. Some children are unable to focus on any activities until they have taken medication, so that might be the very first thing they need to do each morning.

As they get older and learn to manage their AD/HD, it helps some children and teens to tie taking medication to another daily activity. Times that can serve as reminders include:

- when sitting down for breakfast
- before brushing teeth
- between taking a morning shower and getting dressed
- when shaving or styling hair.

Tying medication to the moment of departure is not a good idea. Rushing out the door tends to close one’s focus for other activities, and it doesn’t allow time for going back if the dose is missed.

Some children receive a

lower-dose version of their medication in the evening. To which activity can this be tied to make it easier to remember?

Medications at school

You won’t have to deal with this issue if your child takes one of the longer-lasting medications now on the market. But if your child has to take a dose while at school, learn about the school district’s medication policy before the school year starts.

› Students usually must go to a designated office, where all medications sent by parents are kept, in order to receive medication during the school day. Work with the school to build a regular time for this into your child’s schedule.

› Older students who stay for extracurricular activities may need to schedule a stop at the office for an afternoon dose following their last class.

Daily for adults

Adults often find it helps to tie taking medication to other activities.

› Some need to take medication immediately upon rising, before starting anything else.

› Others take a morning dose after filling the coffee pot and before pouring that first cup, or while having breakfast, getting dressed, or reviewing the day’s to-do list.

› Those who take an evening dose may tie it to similar activities.

› Program your watch, personal data assistant, or cell phone to beep when it’s time for your dose.

Schedule regular appointments

Since prescriptions are written for a certain number of refills, you can meet regularly

with your prescribing healthcare professional to evaluate how well the meds are working. Older children and adolescents should be included in discussions as part of learning to manage their AD/HD.

Plan regular appointments with your prescribing healthcare professional and make sure to mark them on your calendar, day planner, or PDA. Set up the next visit on the way out of an appointment to avoid having to call later.

Notebook system

Use a spiral notebook and folder to keep track of information about medications. The notebook is a wonderful place for questions because you can write the answer next to the question, and the folder is a good place for handout information.

› For each prescription, write the date at the top of the notebook page and tape a photocopy of the prescription beneath it. Everything remains in one place for easy reference.

› Between appointments, write down your questions, observations on how well the medicine appears to be working, and any new information.

› Bring your notebook to appointments. Make a note of directions about how and when to take the medication. Ask the prescribing healthcare professional to explain anything you don’t understand and to repeat what you don’t catch the first time.

Medications change formulations. Life has its challenges and successes. Children grow, mature, and learn. All these affect how you manage medications, so be willing to adapt your routines based on new information and family changes. But remember to write things down in the notebook! ●

