



WORLD
ADHERENCE
DAY **27 MARCH**

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WHAT DOES 'ADHERENCE' MEAN?

ADHERENCE is how much a person's behavior, such as taking medication or following lifestyle changes, aligns with recommendations agreed with their healthcare provider.

Your healthcare team may call it **ADHERENCE**. Most of us call it '**staying on track**'. What it really means is working together with your healthcare team to find a treatment plan that fits into your life, so that it feels realistic and doable for you.

It's not about simply '**doing what your doctor tells you to do**'. It's about partnership: talking openly with your healthcare team (i.e. your doctor, nurse and/or pharmacist) about what's working, what isn't, and what could help you stay on track with your treatment plan.

When you find a treatment plan that works for you, you should be able to comfortably:

- ✓ Take your medications as prescribed
- ✓ Follow a healthy diet
- ✓ Stay active

Think of it as finding your rhythm – small daily habits that can help protect your cardiometabolic health



“

FOR ME, IT'S LIKE PLAYING A GUITAR. HOW DO YOU PLAY GUITAR? RHYTHM. YOU HAVE TO CREATE A RHYTHM IN YOUR LIFE. ”

WHY DOES IT MATTER TO ME?

It's about progress, not perfection.

Being adherent (or staying on track) is about doing what you can, when you can, to look after your own well-being.

Every small step helps your cardiometabolic health



STAYING ADHERENT HELPS ME GET THE MOST OUT OF MY TREATMENT PLAN INTO THE FUTURE.

HOW STAYING ON TRACK HELPS MY HEALTH AND MY LIFE

SHORT-TERM

BENEFITS OF STAYING ON TRACK:

Some benefits you may not feel as they will be invisible, but protective

- ✓ Having fewer dizzy or breathless days
- ✓ Feeling more confident and in control, knowing you're taking care of your health day by day
- ✓ Positive communications with healthcare providers
- ✓ Doing more of what you enjoy

LONG-TERM

BENEFITS OF STAYING ON TRACK:

- ✓ Keeps blood pressure and cholesterol in check
- ✓ Preserves circulation and reduces risk of complications like blood clots
- ✓ Lowers your risk of heart attack, stroke, or hospital stays
- ✓ Helps you stay active and independent
- ✓ Builds resilience against future health challenges
- ✓ Spending more time with family and the people who matter to you

REMINDER:

Because some medications protect your future cardiometabolic health, you may not feel your treatment working right away, but it is important to stay on track to help protect against long-term complications

COMMON CHALLENGES

WE ALL CAN STUMBLE AT HURDLES ALONG THE WAY...
AND THAT'S OKAY



SOMETIMES I FORGET TO TAKE MY MEDICATIONS. I HAVE SO MANY OTHER THINGS HAPPENING. ”

WHEN ROUTINES ARE INTERRUPTED

Travel, family events, shift work, or running out of medication can throw you off your usual routine and make staying on track harder than usual.



MY MEDICINE IS MY LIFELINE. WHEN I MISS A DOSE, I GET A LOT OF DISCOMFORT AND GET FRUSTRATED WITH MYSELF. ”

WHEN IT'S BEEN A HARD DAY

Frustration, stress, or tiredness can be overwhelming. It's very common for people to be forgetful while dealing with these emotions. Struggling to stay on track may also make you feel upset and ashamed, adding to the emotional toll.



SOMETIMES THERE ARE SHORT-TERM SIDE EFFECTS THAT YOU NEED TO POWER THROUGH FOR THE LONG-TERM BENEFITS. ”

IF SIDE EFFECTS BOTHER YOU

You may experience side effects from your treatment. This may tempt you to stop following your treatment plan to stop these side effects from getting any worse – speak to your doctor if you are experiencing any side effects.



WHEN I FEEL FINE, I FORGET WHY I NEED MY PILLS. MY DOCTOR REMINDED ME THEY WORK EVEN WHEN I CAN'T FEEL IT. ”

WHEN YOU FEEL WELL, BUT YOUR CONDITION IS STILL ACTIVE

Cardiometabolic and venous diseases can be 'silent'; for example, with high blood pressure, you might not feel symptoms even though the condition is still there. Sometimes, patients stop following their treatment plan because they feel fine, without realizing that their treatments are working in the background to protect them from future complications.



YOU DON'T ALWAYS FEEL IF THE TREATMENTS ARE WORKING OR NOT. ”

WHEN YOU'RE NOT CONFIDENT IN YOUR TREATMENT, IT'S OKAY TO ASK AGAIN

If you haven't been given enough information about your treatment and/or you do not have access to support groups, it's completely understandable that you might feel a bit lost. You deserve to understand your plan, so ask your healthcare provider for further help.



I JUST DON'T FEEL RIGHT. ”

WHEN YOUR MENTAL HEALTH AFFECTS MOTIVATION

If your mental health is impacting how well you stick with your treatment plan, tell your healthcare provider how you feel. They can help you stay on track, while managing your mental health.

If you ever feel like you are struggling to stay on track with your treatment, talk to a member of your healthcare team **before making any changes to your routine.**

WHAT CAN **HELP ME** STAY ON TRACK

LITTLE HABITS CAN MAKE **A BIG DIFFERENCE** WHEN LIFE GETS BUSY

BUILD A ROUTINE THAT FITS INTO YOUR LIFE



Take your medication at the same time every day. For example, with breakfast or before you brush your teeth



Store your medicine in an organized pillbox for convenience



Keep a spare supply of in-date medication in your travel bag, so you're always ready to go*

*Remember to always check that the expiry date of your medication has not passed before using it.

SIMPLIFY YOUR TREATMENT WHERE POSSIBLE



- > Speak to your healthcare team about longer refills if it's hard to get to the pharmacy
- > Speak to your doctor if you think your treatment plan could be simpler or easier
- > Ask your doctor if any of your medicines are available as a combined pill or tablet (called a single-pill combination). This can make it easier to stay on track and reduce the number of pills you take each day

USE REMINDERS AND SIMPLE TOOLS



- > Use an app, website, or paper tracker to help monitor your consistency and receive treatment reminder notifications
- > Little reminders can help protect your cardiometabolic health
- > Write reminder notes to help you stay on track with a visual reminder

FIND SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGEMENT



- > Join a patient support group to expand the circle of people around you who understand your journey. You are not alone in this
- > Lean on your friends, family, online patient communities, and healthcare team to help you stay motivated and organized
- > If you're finding it hard to stay on track, talk openly with your healthcare team; they want to help you find what works for you to stay motivated and organized

“

**TAKING
MEDICATION
IS TIED TO MY
ROUTINE.**”

WHAT IF I MISS A DOSE OF MY MEDICATION?

MISSING A DOSE IS NOT A FAILURE

“I WAS ON HOLIDAY AND
FORGOT TO TAKE A PILL ONE DAY”

If you miss a dose of your medication, stay calm and follow the steps below to safely get back on track:

- 1** Do not take a ‘double dose’ (i.e. twice the normal amount of your medicine) to ‘make up for it’
- 2** For more information about your treatment, always refer to the official leaflet provided with your medication.
- 3** If you need more information, contact your doctor or pharmacist and tell them what has happened (e.g. what medication you have been prescribed, how many doses you have missed, and how long it has been since your missed dose). They will be able to give you more guidance about how to safely start taking your medicine again
 - ✓ Everyone forgets things from time to time, it’s nothing to be upset or embarrassed about. Your healthcare team are here to support you in getting back on track
 - ✓ It’s important that you tell your doctor if you have missed any doses so that they can monitor you accurately and give you the correct guidance
 - ✓ **If your healthcare team is unavailable (e.g. if it’s out of hours) and if you are feeling unwell, go to your nearest emergency department for further advice**
- 4** If you find you’re missing doses often, talk to your healthcare team about why – there may be ways to simplify your treatment

“

I'M VERY OPEN WITH MY DOCTOR AND I TELL HIM WHEN I MISS A DOSE. IT'S IMPORTANT TO INFORM HIM SO HE CAN PROPERLY ASSESS MY RESULTS DURING FOLLOW-UP APPOINTMENTS. TALK TO YOUR DOCTOR IF YOU MISS A DOSE. ”



TALKING WITH MY DOCTOR



THESE PILLS MAKE ME TIRED, IS THERE ANOTHER OPTION?

I'M WORRIED ABOUT SIDE EFFECTS, I'D LIKE TO UNDERSTAND MY OPTIONS.

IT'S HARD FOR ME TO MAKE TIME DURING THE DAY TO BE ACTIVE. HOW DO OTHER PEOPLE DO IT?

I DON'T UNDERSTAND MY TREATMENT PLAN. CAN YOU EXPLAIN WHAT MEDICATIONS I AM TAKING?

I FEEL LIKE NO ONE UNDERSTANDS WHAT I'M GOING THROUGH. ARE THERE ANY PATIENT SUPPORT GROUPS IN THE LOCAL AREA?

SOMETIMES I FORGET TO TAKE MY MEDICINE. WHAT CAN I DO TO MAKE IT EASIER TO REMEMBER? ”

Your healthcare team wants to help you. Being open and honest means they can do this.

Talking about your concerns can feel overwhelming and scary. You can bring a family member or friend with you as support. If you are struggling to stay on track and feel confident in your treatment plan, before your visit, prepare questions like the ones in the box to ask your doctor, nurse or pharmacist.

MORE HELP AND SUPPORT
TRUSTED RESOURCES THAT COULD HELP YOU ON YOUR JOURNEY:



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world-heart-federation.org

TIP:

BRING THIS BOOKLET TO YOUR NEXT APPOINTMENT TO HELP YOU START OPEN CONVERSATIONS ABOUT YOUR TREATMENT

MY ACTION PLAN

Fill in the information below to record your routine and help you stay on track, including your medication and lifestyle plans.

If your circumstances change, you might like to make a new list.

Health condition	Name of medicine	When I take it	Find support and encouragement
Example: blood pressure	Example: blood pressure pill	Example: 8am, with breakfast	Example: phone alarm
To follow a heart-healthy diet, I will try to...	I will try to stay active by...	To rest properly, I will try to go to bed by...	Weekly checklist: I took my medication as planned I followed my heart-healthy lifestyle plan (e.g. diet, exercise, rest) I reached out for support if I needed help

My glossary
You may hear these words from the people in your healthcare team and we want to make sure you feel comfortable understanding them.

Take note of any others you may hear and explore their meaning:

- Adherence**
Staying on track with your medication and healthy lifestyle
- Blood pressure**
The force of your blood pushing against your blood vessels
- Blood sugar/glucose**
The amount of sugar (glucose) in your blood
- Cardiometabolic**
The combined health of the cardiovascular and metabolic systems, including blood pressure, blood sugar levels, blood lipids (cholesterol) and body fat
- Check-up**
A regular appointment with your doctor or nurse to monitor your health and treatment progress
- Cholesterol**
A fatty substance in your blood
- Circulation**
The movement of blood around your body
- Clot**
A thick, sticky lump of blood that forms to stop bleeding, e.g. when you cut yourself, a clot helps seal the wound
- Complications**
Health problems that can happen if a condition isn't managed well over time

- Dose**
The amount of medicine you take each time
- Healthcare team**
The group of professionals who help you with your condition, like your doctors, nurses and pharmacists
- Heart disease**
A condition where your heart and/or blood vessels don't work as well as they should
- Lifestyle change**
Changes in everyday habits like eating well, staying active, quitting smoking, and getting enough sleep
- Medication schedule**
The times of day and days of the week when you take your medicines
- Refill**
Getting your next supply of medicine from the pharmacy by ordering a repeat prescription
- Side effect**
An unwanted reaction from a medicine
- Swelling/edema**
When fluid builds up in your legs, ankles, or feet
- Treatment plan**
All the actions you take to treat your condition, including taking your medicine, staying active, eating a healthy diet, and getting enough rest



This booklet is for education only and is not intended to replace medical advice from your care team. Always talk to your healthcare team before making any change to your treatment.

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ADHERENCE WORDBOOK

MAKE IT A HABIT.
MAKE IT PART OF YOUR LIFE.



JUST LIKE MUSIC, TREATMENT NEEDS RHYTHM.

Taking your medication regularly and keeping healthy habits help your body stay in balance. This booklet is here to help you understand your treatment, talk openly with your healthcare team, and find simple ways to stay on track, your own way.

MADE POSSIBLE BY





**For doctors, nurses, pharmacists,
and other healthcare providers**

HOW TO USE THIS TOOL:

This short booklet helps you start supportive discussions about treatment routines with your patients living with cardiometabolic and venous diseases.

Use it to:

- ✓ Explain adherence in clear, everyday language
- ✓ Reassure patients that adherence slips happen and they are fixable
- ✓ Encourage patients to forgive themselves if something doesn't go to plan
- ✓ Help them find simple, realistic ways to stay on track
- ✓ Support shared decision-making and build confidence in their treatment plan

These conversations can make a real difference; non-adherence rates in chronic conditions are estimated to be ~50%¹, and poor adherence is linked to worse health outcomes and higher hospitalization rates.

Talking about adherence in a patient-centered, non-judgmental way helps strengthen engagement, uncover barriers, and empower patients to take small, achievable steps toward their treatment goals.

¹ *Adherence to Long-Term Therapies: evidence for action. World Health Organization 2003*

Try these conversation starters with your patients:



WHEN WE TALK ABOUT ADHERENCE, WE MEAN HOW CLOSELY SOMEONE FOLLOWS THEIR TREATMENT PLAN. IT CAN MAKE A REAL DIFFERENCE IN HOW WELL TREATMENT WORKS. WHAT DOES THAT IDEA MEAN TO YOU ”



ADHERENCE ISN'T ALWAYS EASY, BUT IT'S AN IMPORTANT PART OF YOUR TREATMENT PLAN. HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT YOUR CURRENT TREATMENT PLAN, AND WHAT HELPS YOU STAY ON TRACK? ”



SOMETIMES IT CAN HELP TO TALK ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF STAYING ON TRACK WITH A TREATMENT PLAN. WOULD IT BE OKAY IF WE DISCUSSED WHAT ADHERENCE MEANS AND WHAT THAT LOOKS LIKE FOR YOUR TREATMENT PLAN ”



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**When discussing adherence with your patients,
remember to:**



Listen without judgment:
patients may already
feel guilty or
frustrated



Explore potential barriers:
practical,
emotional, or social



Work together on achievable goals:
small changes can
build momentum



**Acknowledge effort
and progress:**
even small
improvements matter



**Use open-ended
questions:**
understand daily
barriers

**IT ONLY TAKES A FEW MINUTES TO GO THROUGH THIS BOOKLET TOGETHER,
OR YOU SHOULD CHECK THE PATIENT'S UNDERSTANDING AT THE NEXT VISIT**

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