



CANCERcare®

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fact sheet

# THE IMPORTANCE OF TAKING YOUR PILLS EVERY DAY ON SCHEDULE

Many medications treating cancer are available in pill form. It is important to follow your doctor's instructions carefully and take your medication as scheduled.

## HERE ARE SOME TIPS FOR STICKING (OR "ADHERING") TO YOUR TREATMENT PLAN

**Get instructions in writing.** When you start a treatment plan, have your doctor provide written instructions that you can take home and review. The instructions should explain:

- The size and appearance of the pill
- How often to take it
- What time to take it
- The dose per pill
- What to do if you miss a dose
- Whether to take it on an empty stomach or with food

**Get the details.** Understanding how your medication works and why you are taking it will help you feel more in control. Be sure your doctor explains how your medication will benefit you. Find out what, if any, side effects to expect so that you're not taken by surprise. Be aware of any foods or other medications that could interfere with your medication. You may find it helpful to create a drug diary like the sample one on the back of this fact sheet.

**Communicate with your health care team.** Your health care team can include doctors, nurses, social workers, your pharmacist, and others. Write down the names and phone numbers of key members of your team so that you will have someone to call with any questions.



**Consider the cost.** Ask your health care team about the cost of your medications, and find out if they are covered by your insurance. Many drug companies may offer patient assistance programs to help you obtain medications at a lower cost, or with a referral from your doctor. Some organizations such as the CancerCare Co-Payment Assistance Foundation ([www.cancercaarecopay.org](http://www.cancercaarecopay.org)) provide co-payment assistance to eligible individuals with insurance coverage. The Medicine Assistance Tool ([www.medicineaassistaancetool.org](http://www.medicineaassistaancetool.org)) helps people without prescription drug coverage get the medicines they need at a reduced cost or free.

**Plan ahead.** Before traveling, check the number of refills left on your prescription. Let your doctor know when you are travelling and if you will need your medication refilled soon. Bring your medication in its original container, and avoid packing pills in checked luggage in case your luggage is lost.

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**Ask for help.** Ask a friend or family member who can take turns picking up your prescriptions from the pharmacy. If you live alone, find a friend who understands your medication routine. Check in with that person regularly to let him or her know you've taken your medication.

**Join a support group.** For some people, taking pills after they have finished their cancer treatments is difficult. They may feel as though they will never stop being "cancer patients." Others may find that taking pills is a daily reminder of cancer. Joining a support group or speaking with a counselor often helps people cope better.

### KEEPING A MEDICATION DIARY

A medication diary can help you keep track of the pills you take each day. Your diary can be recorded on a smart phone app or written down in a notebook. Bring the diary with you to medical appointments.



### CancerCare® Can Help

Founded in 1944, CancerCare is the leading national organization providing free support services and information to help people manage the emotional, practical and financial challenges of cancer. Our comprehensive services include counseling and support groups over the phone, online and in-person, educational workshops, publications and financial and co-payment assistance. All CancerCare services are provided by professional oncology social workers and world-leading cancer experts.

To learn more, visit [www.cancercare.org](http://www.cancercare.org) or call **800-813-HOPE (4673)**.

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