



CANCERcare®

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fact sheet

ADHERENCE AND CHRONIC MYELOGENOUS LEUKEMIA (CML): OVERCOME THE CHALLENGES TO TAKING YOUR PILLS

Thanks to advances in research, people with chronic myelogenous leukemia (CML) are managing their diagnosis better than ever before, and many are experiencing long-term remissions. Since CML treatment requires ongoing therapy, people with CML should envision their journey as a marathon, not a sprint. There are many factors that may influence your ability to follow a treatment plan, including side effects from medications, a change in routine, and new responsibilities. This fact sheet will address barriers to taking your pills, provide practical tips for staying on schedule, and discuss communication strategies so that you can go the distance.



STRATEGIES FOR TAKING YOUR PILLS

Manage side effects

A major barrier for many CML patients in taking their pills on schedule is the concern over side effects. Effects from treatment can be difficult and may lead you to stop your therapy. Each drug has unique side effects that will vary in type and severity; they can even vary with each patient. Side effects such as fluid retention, muscle cramps, and bone pain can impact your quality of life and your daily routine

It's important to remember that side effects can be managed. Talk to your health care team before beginning your treatment to ask about potential treatment effects and ways to prevent them. Work with your doctor to remove any obstacles that can keep you from staying on a therapy. The goal of treatment is to find a good fit so that you feel comfortable. Maintaining good communication with your health care team is important in managing side effects.

Get organized

Some patients struggle with getting organized and staying on a daily medication schedule. But in order for a therapy to be effective, you must maintain a steady amount of medicine in your body. Organizing your medications in a pill box may help reduce the risk of missing a dose or taking incorrect medications. Routine also plays an important role in adherence by triggering a person's memory.

To prevent missing a dose, consider creating a dosing schedule. Set an alarm on your watch, phone, or computer to alert you that it's time to take your pills. Or, make a simple poster that lists all of your current medications by type, time, and dose. Whatever you decide, choose a method that works best for you based on your preferences and needs.

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Plan ahead

Although a change to your daily routine could possibly throw your schedule off, by being prepared and planning ahead, you can take charge of your own health. Keep a log of your medications in your wallet or purse with your doctor's contact information and the pharmacy where your prescription was filled. Leave a copy at home and make sure your family knows where to find the list in case of an emergency.

If you are planning to go away on a business trip or on a vacation, check that you have enough medicine to last in case your return is delayed. If you notice that you do not have enough medicine and it's too early to ask for a refill, talk to your pharmacist. He or she may be able to call your insurance company and explain the situation on your behalf.

Communicating your needs

A major strategy in helping you take your pills on schedule is to maintain open communication with members of your health care team. Whether you are having problems with side effects or feeling anxious about adhering to your treatment schedule, share your feelings with loved ones, your doctor, or an oncology social worker.

If you are having trouble with your vision and are worried about taking your medicine as directed, talk to your doctor. Your pharmacy may also be able to help by printing larger labels if you let them know in advance.

Remember, the people on your support team, including health care professionals and loved ones, are there to help you cope. By working together with them, you can manage your treatment schedule and enhance your quality of life.



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.

To learn more, visit www.cancercares.org or call **800-813-HOPE (4673)**.

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