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## Pharmacy Phacts - January 2020

In this issue PharmD candidates discuss Making Healthy Habits Stick and Medications only Work if You Take Them

### **Making Healthy Habits Stick**

Grant Meacham, PharmD Candidate 2020



It's that time of year again! That's right...It's time for New Years' resolutions. The yearly ritual where we set goals so that we can remove bad habits from our lifestyle and make healthy habits. That is, until we fall back into our old ways by February. Have you ever wondered how to make those healthy habits stick? Three tips to help make your resolutions successful are to understand your current habits, make S.M.A.R.T. goals, and to be patient.

1. Understand your current habits: One of the characteristics of habits is that they occur without much thought. You can find yourself in a bad habit without realizing it. Finding out if there is a secondary cause of a bad habit is a key first step. Maybe you find yourself always smoking a cigarette when driving to work. A way to change your routine is to take a different vehicle in the morning. Perhaps, you find yourself overeating when watching TV. Try to find an alternate activity such as taking a walk or playing a game with family or friends.



2. Make S.M.A.R.T. goals: S.M.A.R.T stands for specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-bound.
- a. Specific: A specific goal makes it easier to measure progress and more clearly defines your goal. For example, a goal of losing weight in 2020 would be non-specific. A goal of losing 1 pound per week would be a good example of a specific goal.
  - b. Measurable: A measurable goal is important for the same reasons as a specific goal. It allows you to see progress you are making towards your goal. The

example of losing 1 pound per week would be easy to measure because you could use scale results each week.

- c. Achievable: The all or nothing approach is almost always unsuccessful. Try making small short-term goals that can lead to long-term successes. Setting grand goals can be good motivation but may not be realistic at first. For example, a goal of losing 60 pounds in 12 months sounds very daunting. Setting a goal of losing 5 pounds every month sounds much more reasonable, but if you achieve this goal each month you will have lost 60 pounds at the end of the year.
  - d. Realistic: This point in goal-making is very closely related to achievability. You should consider your time and resources when setting goals. Goals should be at a level that you are able to realistically complete while still pushing you to grow and improve.
  - e. Time-bound: Goals should have a timeline to complete. Without a time constraint, goals can just become wishful daydreams that are never accomplished. A time schedule increases motivation and commitment to the goal. An important note is that the time schedule can, and should, change with the circumstances of life. As conditions in your life change, the time to your goal should change so that it remains achievable and realistic.
3. Be patient: Making slow progress to becoming healthier is okay. There will more than likely be bumps along the way as you progress toward your goals. The important point to remember is to keep moving forward. As long as you are working toward your goals, even if it is slowly, you will reach your goal eventually.

Good Luck!

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# Medications Only Work if You Take Them

Madison Young, PharmD Candidate 2020

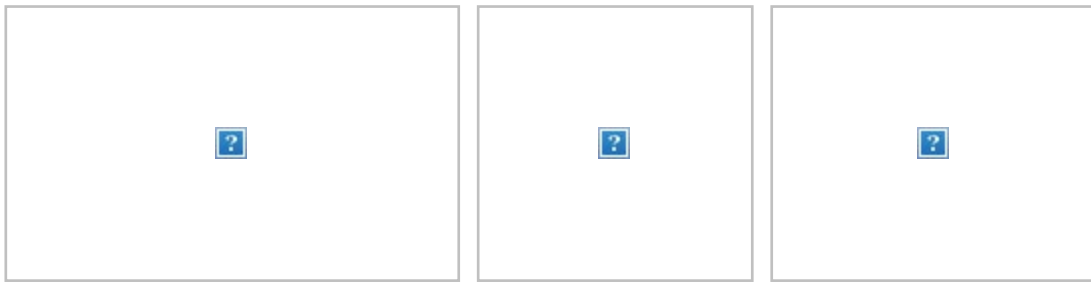


Statistics show that at least 50% of adults in the United States have one chronic health condition, meaning a health issue that they will have to treat long term. Furthermore, almost 33% of Americans have two or more chronic conditions. For example, nearly 50% of people in the US have diabetes or prediabetes and an overwhelming majority of those people require medications to manage their condition. Among these patients with diabetes and other patients with chronic illnesses, nearly half of them do not take their medications as prescribed. More than 25% of new prescriptions written for chronic conditions are not even filled once!

The benefits of better compliance with medication regimens are straight forward. It directly leads to better control of chronic conditions, delayed or prevented progression of disease, abundant health cost savings by avoidance of flares or episodes, and cost savings in emergency department visits as well.

So, what keeps people from taking their medications as prescribed? There are deterring factors such as affordability and knowledge of health conditions, but the number one reason that people are not adherent is forgetfulness. They simply don't remember to take their meds.

There are countless resources available to the public to help them break down the barrier of memory when it comes to taking their prescriptions the way they're supposed to. Duke University's Medication Adherence Alliance "consists of key experts in the field of medication adherence including representatives from consumer advocacy groups, community health providers, non-profit groups, the academic community, decision-making government officials, and industry representatives. The overarching goal of the Alliance is to assemble a body of medication adherence experts to comment and provide feedback on current and proposed legislation and policy impacting medication adherence. "Valuable tools for improving adherence to medications include the following:



One useful resource is a personal health record (PHR). The American Heart Association (AHA) encourages the use of Heart 360, a PHR to keep track of doctor visits, test and lab results, medication lists and other notes pertaining to health. Being more engaged and collaborative about what medications do and how they should be taken can provide a significant boost in compliance.

Another powerful tool is handheld or wearable technology. Setting a medication reminder on a smartphone is one method, but there are also applications specifically for medication reminding that are helpful. An excellent one is MediSafe Medication Management with which patients can list medications, set reminders, and even check for drug interactions.

An additional proven tactic to increase medication adherence is synchronization of all chronic medications to be filled at the same time by the pharmacy. Align Your Refills is an initiative by the American Pharmacists Association that helps patients and pharmacies coordinate prescription refills.

Each of these resources have shown proven benefits in increasing compliance rates to chronic medication regimens.

Remember, medications only work if you take them!

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