

# Medication Adherence Summary



## 1. What is medication adherence?

Medication adherence describes the degree to which a patient follows his or her prescription or takes his or her medication as directed.

## 2. How big of a problem is medication adherence in the United States?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports medication nonadherence in the U.S. costs \$100 billion to \$300 billion per year and constitutes 33% to 69% of hospital admissions.

### Extent of nonadherence across the population

For every 100 prescriptions written



Filled by the pharmacy



Picked up from the pharmacy



Taken properly



Refilled as prescribed



At any given time, about 50% of patients are not adherent.

## 3. How is medication adherence measured?

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services and HEDIS use the proportion of days covered, also known as PDC, to measure adherence. PDC is the proportion of days in the measurement period covered by prescription claims for the same medication or another in its therapeutic category. If a patient has a PDC of 80% or greater, the medication will probably achieve most of the potential clinical benefit based on literature.

## 4. How do I interpret a PDC of 50%

A PDC of 50% indicates that the patient is taking his or her medication 50% of the time. Since this value is below 80%, the member is considered nonadherent.

## 5. What HEDIS and STAR measures are affected by medication adherence?

Focusing on adherence pays off both directly and indirectly. Below is a chart of incentive measures that either directly or indirectly relate to medication adherence. The direct measures are assessed by adherence to the respective class of medications. The indirect measures are assessed by disease-state-specific goals, which can be influenced by a patient's adherence to their chronic medications. Qualification for these measures is dependent on the patient's health plan, such as Medicare Advantage or commercial HMO or PPO.

Abbreviation	Measure
PDC	Proportion of days covered – medication adherence for diabetes (noninsulin agents)
PDC	Proportion of days covered – medication adherence for hypertension (RAS antagonists)
PDC	Proportion of days covered – medication adherence for cholesterol (statins)
MMA	Medication management for people with asthma
CBP	Controlling high blood pressure (<140/90 mmHg)
CDC	Comprehensive diabetes care – blood sugar controlled
CDC	Comprehensive diabetes care – HbA1c adequate control (<8%)
CDC	Comprehensive diabetes care – HbA1c poorly controlled (>9%)

HbA1c = hemoglobin A1c; mmHg = millimeters of mercury

= Direct     = Indirect

# Tips to Improve Medication Adherence

## Prescribe generic medications.

Multiple studies have shown cost is an important factor leading to lower adherence.

## Establish a default quantity of 90 days for your chronic medications.

The less frequently patients must pick up a prescription, the more likely they are to be adherent.

## Recommend use of mail order.

- Many patients can receive up to a 90-day supply when using mail order.
- Patients often save money on copays by using mail order.

## Communicate with your patients about their adherence.

- Explain your rationale for choosing a specific medication, especially for medications where patients may not notice any benefits, such as statins or anti-hypertensives.
- Ask open-ended questions about side effects, financial needs and other barriers to adherence.
- Use motivational interviewing techniques and shared decision-making.
- Ask your patient to bring in his or her medication bottles to appointments to verify the last fill dates and pharmacy information.

## Use support staff to call patients a few days after starting a new medication.

This is a good time to ask patients how they are tolerating the new medication and if they are remembering to take it every day.

## Encourage the use of adherence aids.

Adherence aids can include:

- Medication boxes or other systems that have been specifically designed to overcome forgetfulness and improve adherence
- Smartphone apps
- A regular alarm on a smartphone can help be a daily reminder to take a medication

## Encourage patients to use their Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan insurance card so their fills count toward their adherence rate.

This helps us to:

- Provide better quality of care
  - A complete list of all the patients' medications helps us improve their overall quality of care.
- Ensure greater safety
  - Each drug claim is reviewed for safety factors including possible drug interactions, inappropriate dosages and duplicate medications.
- Avoid fraud



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