

Tips for Helping Teens Gain Independence in Medication Management

I Do, We Do, You Do

Use a scaffolding approach to teaching your teen. Scaffolding means to slowly move the learner (your child) towards understanding and independence.



- Junior year of high school is the ideal time to begin this process.
- If your teen struggles in one of the stages, you may have moved too fast – drop back to the previous stage.
- Tie achievement of medication management to a desired privilege (such as driving).
- Make sure the written directions are saved on their phone, in their email or another place that is always accessible.

Once your teen can complete their medication routine with only a written direction reference sheet, they are ready for medication independence!

Tips for Helping Teens Gain Independence in Medication Management

Teens need to be experts on their medications.

- Make it a research project.
- Have your teen research their meds and write out:
 - Brand and generic name of all medications.
 - Dosage they take in measurements (mg) and number of pills.
 - Times medication should be taken.
 - Common side effects and negative interactions of medications (e.g. supplements, alcohol).

Set up a pill system that works for your teen.

- Use a weekly pill box.
 - Explore options (check Amazon) to find the right pill box for your teen. Some options include:
 - A seven day box that provides a.m./p.m. or the appropriate number of doses per day (approximate cost - \$4).
 - An electronic pill box that has an alarm clock function (approximate cost - \$25).
 - An automatic pill dispenser that has an alarm and automatically dispenses pills when the alarm goes off (approximate cost - \$80).
- Find a place to keep the pill box that is visited daily (e.g. next to the phone charger).

Set up a refill system that works for your teen.

- Agree on when a refill should be made (e.g. how many pills are left when refill ordered).
- Consider using a pharmacy that provides app-based refills (e.g. Walgreens). Many of these pharmacies will send reminders when refills are likely needed and allow refills to be placed in the app.
- Consider using a 24-hour pharmacy that teens can visit when they realize after business hours they forgot to pick up their refill.

Daily management of medication

- Medication should be part of the daily routine. Take it at the same time, in the same sequence the teen goes through every day (Do you brush your teeth right before bed? Keep pills by the toothbrush and take them right before brushing.).
- Use phone alarms as a reminder to take medications. Make sure the tone is unique (and annoying) so it can not be overlooked.
- Does your teen ignore the alarm? Try an app to keep them organized.
 - Epsy: Seizure Log for Epilepsy by Livanova
 - My Seizure Diary by Epilepsy Foundation of America
 - Medisafe Medication Management by MediSafe Inc. - This app can send an alert to a family member if a medication dose is missed.
- Does your teen sleep late and miss their morning dose of medication? Talk to your physician about adjusting dose timing in a way that makes sense with their schedule (e.g., move from 7 a.m./7 p.m. doses to 11 a.m./11 p.m.).