

Medication Adherence: *Diabetes and Hypertension*

Medication adherence is the extent to which behavior corresponds with agreed-upon recommendations from a healthcare provider

This differs from medication reconciliation - the process of identifying an accurate, complete list of medications and addressing discrepancies.

In Colorado, 26% of people with diabetes & 23% of people with hypertension report low adherence to medications for their conditions

Low adherence has major implications for patients and clinics:

- Increased mortality and morbidity
- Longer, more frequent hospitalizations
- Faster disease progression
- Increased risk of adverse drug events
- Increased chronic disease complications
- Higher cost of care

Low adherence is a complex problem caused by five interacting dimensions.

Social and economic:

In Colorado, 43% of people with diabetes and 27% of those with hypertension worry about the cost of their medication.

Healthcare-related:

In Colorado, 47% of people on Medicaid with diabetes and 36% of those with hypertension report low adherence.

Therapy-related:

In Colorado, 42% of people with diabetes and 34% of those with hypertension worry about how their medication will affect them.

Patient-related:

In Colorado, 29% of people with diabetes and 28% of those with hypertension report that taking medication more than once daily is inconvenient.

Condition-related:

In Colorado, 20% of people with diabetes and 18% of those with hypertension have skipped their medication because it had made them feel bad.

Interventions:

Simplify the regimen

Adjust the timing and frequency of medications, encourage adherence aids

Impart knowledge

Focus on shared decision-making, explain instructions, keep the medical team informed of changes

Modify patient beliefs and behavior

Provide positive reinforcement, address patient questions and concerns

Provide communication and trust

Listen to the patient and use plain language, ask for patient input and opinion

Leave the bias

Understand knowledge gaps and health literacy, address language and cultural barriers

Evaluate adherence

Ask the patient about their adherence levels, use an adherence scale

Measuring Adherence

Adherence scales are simple questionnaires patients can take at your clinic. There are many tools available to measure adherence. The Voils Medication Adherence scale is recommended because it is short, free and validated for hypertension medication regimens. The Voils scale can help clinicians assess whether a patient took all prescribed doses, missed or skipped doses, or was not able to take doses over the past seven days.