

Help Patients Overcome Med Administration Hurdles

Some patients have a hard time administering their meds.

Help spot patients having trouble...and involve your pharmacist. Problems can usually be solved with training, simple tricks, or devices.

Oral tablets or capsules can be difficult to swallow.

Listen for patients complaining about pill size or shape...this can be a red flag that swallowing is a problem.

For some patients, tipping the head FORWARD when swallowing...or hiding a pill in thick, mushy food...can help it go down more easily.

Use our tech tutorial, *Which Tablets and Capsules Can Be Crushed, Opened, or Split?*, to see if the med can be made easier to swallow. Or check if another dosage form is available (liquid, dissolving tab, etc).

Assist with locating products that may help pills slide down easier (*Pill Glide*, etc)...or special cups (*Oralflo*, etc) that may do the trick.

Inhalers can be challenging, since they require proper technique...and each type of inhaler is used a little differently.

Patients need to inhale SLOWLY and deeply with metered-dose inhalers (salbutamol, etc) and soft-mist inhalers (*Combivent Respimat*, etc)...but QUICKLY and deeply with dry-powder inhalers (*Symbicort*, etc).

Expect some patients to get a spacer device (*AeroChamber*, etc) if they can't "press and breathe" with metered-dose inhalers. Spacers "hold" the med in the device...and give the patient more time to inhale.

Eye drops may be tricky for some patients to instill.

Tilting the head back...forming a "pocket" with the lower eyelid...and looking up and away before instilling the drop can help.

Help find devices to ease administration, if needed. For example, drop guides (*AutoDrop*, etc) help keep eyes open and improve aim.

Patches need to be applied correctly to stay on and be effective.

Sticking patches to clean, dry skin...and avoiding areas where tight clothing can loosen the patch...can help keep the patch in place.

Stay alert for patients claiming patches are falling off after getting wet. Most patches can be worn while swimming, bathing, or showering...but some can come loose if exposed to very hot water or steam (*Estalis*, *Estradot*, etc).

Share our patient handouts...*So You Think You Can't Swallow Pills*, *Tips for Correct Use of Inhalers*, and *How to Use Eye Meds*...and see our cheat sheet, *Dos and Don'ts With Patches*, for more tips.

Key References:

-J Pharm Prac Res 2017;47(3):241-7

-Australas Med J 2011;4(4):183-9

-J Allergy Clin Immunol Pract Published online Feb 15, 2019; doi:10.1016/j.jaip.2019.02.006

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