



Adaptive Strategies for Medication Self-Management

NHCHC Health Management Toolkit

2025

Adaptive strategies focus on minimizing or mitigating barriers to health management by changing the environment, components of an activity, or providing tools/devices to compensate for areas of difficulty, impairments, or lack of skills.

- Adaptive strategies are useful to help a person quickly be able to manage a task or decrease risk and safety concerns.
- Adaptive strategies can be used immediately and in combination with skill building (which may take more time to have an impact).

Medication self-management encompasses the organization of and adherence to a prescribed medication regimen.

It also includes the ability to understand the purpose and intended impact of medications, how to recognize and report side effects, decision making around medication (for example, a missed dose), and communicating with health care professionals about one's experience with medications.

Adaptive strategies for medication self-management focus on modifying how medications are prescribed and how support is provided to help people take medications.

Providers can first [assess a person's medication self-management skills](#) to determine what adaptations may be most effective and useful to the client.

Adaptations to Support Medication Self-Management

Pillboxes:

- Identify a pillbox that the person is able to read, follow, and easily store and that will fit their daily medications. They should be able to open and remove medications from the pillbox.
- Fill the weekly pillbox with or for the person based on their current medication list.
- Develop a process and location for safely and securely storing the person's bottled medications (if needed) to prevent carrying additional prescription bottles or medicines outside of their pillbox.
- Provide a short medication list to go with the pillbox (can be taped to the back or wallet size) in case the person is questioned for having the medications or needs to be able to identify them; include primary care contact information on the list.

Daily medication support at clinic or medical respite program:

- In this scenario, a person comes in daily to take medications, and/or to be given additional medications to take outside of the daily medication visit, for example to take over the weekend. Any medications provided outside the daily medication visit must be properly labeled.
 - For medical respite programs, this may be providing the person their medications daily (by appropriate/licensed staff).
- Provide ongoing education and practice to build independence with taking and managing medications.

Prescribe medications in blister packs:

- Identify if a weekly or monthly supply is more feasible based on frequency of dosing changes, new medications, and the person's ability to hold onto their medications or follow the instructions; consider storing blister packs within the health care setting so the person can take one week at a time, if needed.
- Ensure the person has the motor skills to be able to open the blister packs and understands how to identify day of the week and time of day to take medications.

Medication reconciliation with all the physical medications in the person's possession:

- Consider requesting that person bring in all pills, pill bottles, and other medications (e.g. inhalers) to the health setting for a physical medication reconciliation. This will help to identify repeat, expired, or discontinued medications, as well as prescriptions from outside providers.
- Assist the person with properly disposing of non-current medications.

Medication refills and navigating pharmacies:

- Create a calendar and call-in the person's prescriptions for refills with or for the person.
- Go with the person to pick-up medications from the pharmacy or pick-up the medications for the person.
- Arrange for medications to be delivered to the health setting for medication management support from staff and storage/administration assistance.

Create a simplified medication list:

- [AHRQ Create a Medication List](#)
- In health care for the homeless, medical respite, and street/outreach settings, clients may need assistance to print, fill out, and update this form.
- Providers may also adapt or simplify the form, highlighting essential information, or make it smaller (e.g. wallet sized) for easy storage and access.
- Providers may use this WITH clients until the client is able to use it on their own.
- In some cases, providers may always need to do this with the client, and teach clients how to use this at external appointments, with outside providers, or when going to the hospital.

For more tools and strategies, please see the full Health Management Toolkit available from <https://nhchc.org/resource/health-management-toolkit>

This publication was supported by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of an award totaling \$1,788,315 with 0% percentage financed with non-governmental sources. The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by HRSA, HHS, or the U.S. Government. For more information, please visit HRSA.gov.