

Educating Patients about Medication Adherence

Essential Behaviors to Improve the Patient Experience

Q. Did this provider give you easy to understand instructions about how to take your medicines?

- **Verify that the patient is attentive by reviewing his or her body language and eye contact.** For example, if a patient is not making eye contact or if he or she is fidgeting, it may be an indication that the patient is not ready to talk about the side effects of medications.
- **Offer written information on medications any time verbal information is provided.** Suggest that the patient circle words he or she does not know and have staff explain what these words mean.
 - Highlight important words in written materials.
 - Hold the specific pill bottle or container when reviewing each medicine, if the patient has medications with him or her.

Q. Was the written information this provider gave you easy to understand?

- **Confirm that patients understand they can access the information covered** before they leave the office by asking them to show where in the written resources the information is found.
- **Review materials aloud.** Whatever written materials are used, their effectiveness will be increased if the staff member reviews them aloud with the patient while he or she is still in the office. This gives the patient the opportunity to ask questions and provides another form of learning for patients who have difficulty reading. It is proven that a combination of showing and telling important information results in the greatest recall of information for adults.
 - **Highlight, underline, circle, or number key points** to help patients remember key information.
 - Draw supplemental pictures and write out steps and directions for individual patients.
 - **Ask patients to participate in this conversation** by pointing out particular pieces of information in their written materials; this recall supports remembering the information later.
 - **Demonstrate empathic body language and communication skills when having these conversations.** The anxiety patients feel when they cannot recall information or become confused after a visit is unnecessary and may be minimized when providers confirm that patients understand follow-up care.

Q. During this visit, did this provider suggest ways to help you remember to take your medicines?

- **Tailor suggestions specifically to patients.** Ask how they remember to do other tasks to make the best recommendations on remembering to take medications: write on a calendar, email reminders, an alarm, etc.
- **When discussing medications, go over the following:**
 - Drug name, purpose, Intended effects, Dosage, Time(s) of the day it should be taken
 - How long the patient will need to take the medication, Potential side effects
 - Whether it is a new drug for the patient