

MERCY CLINICS, INC. PRACTICE GUIDELINE

MEDICATION ADHERENCE for HYPERTENSION

At least 25% of hypertension patients do not adhere to medication regimens. A survey of MCI patients showed that 56.5% had a medium or low level of medication adherence. Clinicians are inaccurate in predicting the medication adherence of their patients.

To meet the goal of having 70% of its' patients with hypertension controlled to a level of 140/90 or less Mercy Clinics needs to assess medication adherence by **screening patients who are not meeting treatment goals**. MCI suggests the following recommendations.

1. Assess for medication compliance by directly **asking the patient**: *“Many people forget to take their pills from time to time. Have you missed any pills in the last week?”*
 - Any indication of missing 1 or more pills signals a problem with low adherence.
2. Elicit the **patient’s barriers** to taking medications. *“What gets in the way of taking your medicines on some days?”*
 - Common barriers are: cost, side effects, forgetting, regimen is too complex, not sure medicine is needed, doesn’t think medicine is working, poor health literacy, depression.
3. Elicit the **patient’s ideas** for increasing adherence. *“Do you feel there is anything that will help you take your medicine?”* or *“what works on the days you do take your medicine?”*
 - Methods for increasing adherence are: simplify regimens, written instructions, pill dispensers, reduce cost by using generics or referring to assistance programs, screen for and treat depression, support groups.
4. Collaboratively agree on a plan and **set goals** to improve adherence.
 - Patient generated ideas are the most likely to be effective.
 - Document the goal in the medical record.
5. Advise on the importance of taking medications and provide **written instructions** about taking medicines. Handouts should be written at the eighth grade level or less.
6. Arrange for a **follow-up** visit and ideally contact between visits.
 - Call patient between visits and ask how the plan is going.
 - Call patients who miss the follow-up visit.

Use the 5 A's approach to improve adherence to medications

1. ASSESS: Ask about taking medications.
"Many people forget to take their pills from time to time.
Have you missed any pills in the last week?"
2. ASSIST: Help the patient identify barriers to taking medications.
"What gets in the way of taking your medications"
"What do you feel will help you take your medicine"
3. AGREE: Collaboratively agree on a plan and set goals to improve adherence based on the patient's perceived barriers.
4. ADVISE: Stress the importance on taking medications and of following the agreed plan.
5. ARRANGE: Provide written materials and arrange for follow-up

- Monitoring for appointment non-attendance
Watching for lack of response to treatment escalation