

Increasing Adherence by Prescribing 90-Day Supplies of Medication

Refilling prescriptions can be a major barrier to medication adherence for patients with hypertension, high cholesterol, diabetes and other chronic conditions.

By prescribing 90-day supplies of medications to treat chronic diseases, you can help your patients increase adherence by minimizing multiple pharmacy visits.

The literature shows that:

- Patients who switched from a 30-day to 60-day refill for lipid-lowering therapy had higher rates of adherence with the 60-day supply.¹
- Prescribing a 90-day or more supply of medication increased the likelihood that patients filled their prescriptions.²

Minimize the need for your patients to order refills by prescribing longer-lasting supplies. Here are some ways to get started:

Change Your Prescribing Habits

1. Start patients on a 30-day supply for new medications.
2. Once you establish that long-term medication is well-tolerated, effective and at the proper dose, extend the prescription to a 90-day supply. Write 90-day prescriptions whenever possible.

Overcome Potential “Barriers”

Don't let the following barriers prevent you from prescribing 90-day supplies for your patients.

Patients' insurance will not cover a 90-day supply.

- Write the prescription anyway. Some patients may believe that their insurer will not cover 90-day supplies, but in fact, many do cover common medications for chronic illnesses – including Medicaid and Medicare. If the patient's insurance does not cover a 90-day supply for the medication, the pharmacy can still dispense a 30-day supply on the 90-day prescription.

Electronic Health Records (EHR) default is set at 30 days for printed prescriptions.

- Check with your EHR provider to see if they can change the default to a 90-day prescription supply.

Patients may lose their medication.

- Teach patients how important it is to keep track of and regularly take their medication. This will reinforce safeguarding it.
- Many generic prescriptions cost only pennies a day. The potential cost of lost medication does not outweigh the benefits of improved adherence.

¹ Batal, et al. Impact of Prescription Size on Statin Adherence and Cholesterol. *BMC Health Services Research*. 2007; 7:175.

² Steiner, et al. The effect of prescription size on acquisition of maintenance medications. *J Gen Intern Med*. 1993; 8(6):3063-10.