

Living Well with Dementia Caregiver Tips on Medications



What reasons could cause someone to refuse to take their medications?

- May be difficult to swallow.
- May have a bad taste.
- May have side effects such as diarrhea or vomiting.
- May be uncomfortable in the environment they are in.
- May feel rushed to take medications they are confused about.
- May be overwhelmed at the amount of medications they are being asked to take.
- May not understand what is being asked for them to do (too many steps and they become confused).
- May feel like they are being talked down to or forced to take medications making them feel like they are no longer in control.
- May not understand why they are being asked to take the medication or what it is being taken for.

At times, trying to give medication to an individual living with dementia can be a challenge. The individual may not want to take it because it causes unpleasant side effects or it tastes bad. They may not be able to communicate this verbally, so they refuse to take the medication.

It is important to ensure the individual is receiving their medication in the least restrictive way possible. This may mean that the individual requires their medication in a different form. It is important to keep the individual's prescribing doctor aware of the behaviors and discuss other options available such as patches or oral solutions.

How You Can Help

Develop a Routine Everyone is Comfortable With:

- Use a pill box to organize medications.
- Ask the doctor or pharmacist what times are best for specific medications to be taken.
- Ensure they are comfortable in the environment they are in (minimal noises and distractions, etc.).
- Break down the tasks for the individual to better understand what to expect.

Talk with the Prescribing Doctor:

- If the individual taking the medication is having difficulty swallowing or does not like the taste, see if there are other forms in which the medication can be administered (patches or oral solutions).
- Discuss if it is appropriate to mix medication into food or drinks (always speak with the doctor about this first to avoid any complications).
- Never stop giving medication without discussing it first with the doctor.

For more information about caregiver tips or program availability through Living Well with Dementia, please contact Easterseals Homemakers & Health Services at 603.335.1770.