









# Medication Adherence vs. Compliance: 4 Ways They Differ

Differentiating between medication adherence and medication compliance can help organizations more effectively analyze their performance in each area, identify targeted changes to implement, and then measure the effectiveness of those changes.



Medication Adherence	Medication Compliance
 <p>Medication adherence is the “act of filling new prescriptions or refilling prescriptions on time.”<sup>1</sup></p>	 <p>Medication compliance is the “act of taking medication on schedule or taking medication as prescribed.”<sup>1</sup></p>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unnecessary disease progression and complications.</li> <li>• Reduced functional abilities and quality of life.</li> <li>• Additional medical costs and physician visits.</li> <li>• Unnecessary medication changes.</li> </ul>	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased hospital stays.</li> <li>• Increased risk of morbidity and death.</li> <li>• Increased medical expenses.</li> </ul>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nearly 2/3 pharmacy customers do not to fill a prescription due to price.<sup>2</sup></li> <li>• Lack of easy access to a pharmacy to fill or refill prescriptions.</li> <li>• As the number of prescriptions increase, it becomes increasingly difficult to track when medications need to be refilled.</li> </ul>	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A fear of side effects.</li> <li>• If improvement seems minimal, patients may feel compelled to stop taking the drug.</li> <li>• As the number of pills increases, tracking when to take which medication can prove difficult.</li> <li>• Not understanding the importance of taking a medication or not understanding instructions.</li> </ul>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss medication cost and pharmacy access during each appointment.</li> <li>• Recommend generic medications.</li> <li>• Provide information about prescription assistance programs (e.g., NeedyMeds).</li> <li>• Provide information about online pharmacies that can help with access issues.</li> <li>• Advise patients on whether local pharmacies offer refill reminder or automatic refill services.</li> </ul> <p><small>1. <a href="http://www.stroke.org/sites/default/files/resources/NSA_Med_Adherence_brochure.pdf">www.stroke.org/sites/default/files/resources/NSA_Med_Adherence_brochure.pdf</a></small>  <small>2. <a href="http://cvshealth.com/thought-leadership/cvs-health-research-institute/cost-biggest-barrier-medication-adherence">cvshealth.com/thought-leadership/cvs-health-research-institute/cost-biggest-barrier-medication-adherence</a></small></p>	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask patients if they are taking their medication properly at every appointment.</li> <li>• Review side effects and what to do when patients experience them.</li> <li>• Stress the importance of following a regimen and possible deviation risks.</li> <li>• Recommend tools such as pill calendar, pill case, digital dispenser, and mobile app to improve medication tracking.</li> <li>• Let patients know who they should contact with questions or concerns about medications and side effects.</li> <li>• Tailor solutions to specific patient needs and challenges.</li> </ul>