

# HELPFUL GUIDELINES FOR MEDICATION

SOURCE: SCHIZOPHRENIA: A HANDBOOK FOR FAMILIES

## Why Someone Might Refuse Medication

1. Your relative may lack insight about their illness, or not believe they are ill, and thus see no reason to take medication.
2. Your relative may be suffering from unpleasant side effects because of the medication and believe that it causes more problems than it solves.
3. Your relative may be on a complicated medication scheme that involves taking several pills a day. He or she may find the regimen too confusing and may resent the constant reminders of illness.
4. Your relative may feel well and believe that it is not necessary to take the medication anymore.
5. Your relative may welcome the return of symptoms such as voices saying pleasant things that make him or her feel special.

## Guidelines for helping someone take prescribed medication:

1. The initial medication dose must be continuously monitored. Therefore, you should listen carefully to your relative's complaints about side effects and do your best to empathize with any distress about the medication.
2. 'Positive' symptoms (hallucinations, delusions, thought disorder, disorganized behaviour) will usually not reappear immediately upon discontinuation of

medication. Anti-psychotic drugs stay in the human system for six weeks to three months (Risperidone leaves the system more quickly).

3. Explain to your relative that he or she may end up back in the hospital if medication is not taken.
4. If other people in the family are on medication, make administration into a regularly scheduled family ritual.
5. It is easier to take one pill a day than six. Talk to the doctor about the form in which your relative is receiving medication.
6. The use of a weekly pillbox can be an effective tool for people who often forget to take oral medication.
7. Be aware that in paranoid individuals, sneaking pills in food may result in an increase of their symptoms.
8. People cease oral medication more often than injection medication. Injectable meds can't be spat out, hid under the tongue, or disposed of in any way. Discuss the pros and cons of switching medications with the doctor.
9. Injectable medication is administered once a week or once every few weeks, depending on the type of neuroleptic. Consider arranging a 'treat' built around this occasion.
10. Do your best to remain calm and reasonable about getting your relative to take medication.

"Everyone needs a hand to hold onto."



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