

Empowered to Participate

Medication Decisions & Your Recovery Plan



Support and Information for Schizophrenia

Mental health recovery is an ongoing process, not a single outcome. Each person's recovery experience is unique. By making a personalized, inclusive plan for managing a mental health condition, a person has the best chance of living a meaningful life.

The Topic

Medication

This issue empowers you to partner with your doctor around medication and treatment decisions.



Medication is an important and powerful mental health recovery tool.

For many people, medication is a foundation of their recovery plan, along with supportive treatments—like psychotherapy, peer counseling, and supported housing and employment.

It's important to think about your beliefs and experiences around medication. It also can be helpful to learn about available medication options and weigh the benefits and risks of each with your doctor.



If you are able and feel ready, you can become involved in making informed decisions about your treatment, health, wellness, and recovery. When you participate, decisions reflect **YOUR** values and preferences.

Snapshots

Stay on course.

People with schizophrenia who stop taking their medication are **5 times** more likely to have an episode than those who continue to take their medication.



90%

of adults diagnosed with schizophrenia are prescribed medication.

Be patient.

Medication can take time to work and provide symptom relief. It may be up to several weeks before you notice a change in the way you feel.

You and your doctor may have to try a few different options to find the medication(s) that manage your symptoms and works best for you.

Know your options.

There are different ways to take antipsychotic medications, so ask your doctor about treatment options that might be a good fit for **YOU**.

Remind yourself.

When taking your medications is hard to do, remind yourself of the reasons why you decided to take them.

Medication & My Recovery

Why Consider Medication?

Just like some people regularly take medication to treat health conditions, such as heart disease or diabetes, people living with schizophrenia often take antipsychotic medication to get relief from their symptoms.



Being active in your recovery process, including taking medication to manage symptoms, and using other supportive treatments can help:

- Improve your concentration and ability to think clearly
- Provide more focus so you can work toward achieving your goals
- Reduce the chance of an episode or hospitalization



Getting Started

It can be helpful to think about:

What you want your medication to do

Benefits and risks of taking medication

Your past experiences with medication

How medication might help you get or keep things that are important to you

Your beliefs and values about medication



Exploring Your Beliefs

Now that you've started to explore some important questions, think about **your personal beliefs (positive and negative) about medication**. These beliefs can be influenced by things like family, culture, and personal experiences. It can help to be aware of and understand your beliefs.

Go through the statements below and mark whether you agree or disagree. Talk with your treatment team about why or why not.

Statement	 Agree	 Disagree
I understand how medication is likely to help me.		
I don't need to take medication once I feel better.		
For me, the good things about medication outweigh the bad.		
I am worried about the impact of side effects.		
In my culture, taking medication is frowned upon.		
Medications have not helped me in the past.		
It is too hard to remember to take all my medications.		
When my family, loved ones, or members of my treatment team want to be involved in my medication, it's because they are concerned about me.		
I don't need medication to deal with my mental health condition.		
Medication can help me achieve my goals.		
It is embarrassing to take medication.		
Other:		

Medication Thoughts and Strategies

Worksheet

It may be helpful to talk with your doctor or other treatment team members about the way you think about medication.

Write down beliefs you have and consider new ways of thinking about the issue. If helpful, go through the worksheet with a member of your treatment team.

Belief About Medication	Possible New Thoughts	Who Can Help
Example: It is too hard to remember to take all my medications.	I can set an alarm on my phone or in my calendar to help me remember. I can simplify my medication schedule.	My doctor

Below are strategies to help you stay on track with your medication, so you can get the best results. Check the strategies you have tried or would like to try.

Strategy	I Have Used This Strategy	I Want to Try This Strategy
Simplify your medication schedule.		
Talk to your doctor about medication options with less-frequent dosing schedules.		
Schedule medication into your daily routine.		
Think about the benefits of medication.		
Use cues and reminders (notes, alarms, calendars, computer/phone apps).		
Ask people in your support network for help remembering.		
Other		

Making Treatment Decisions

For people living with schizophrenia, there are many treatment options and decisions along the recovery journey.

One important treatment decision is about medication. There are also other decisions about supportive treatments that can be a part of a person's recovery.



Supportive treatments may include:



Going to therapy



Attending support groups



Finding safe and stable housing



Getting employment or vocational counseling



Training in daily living and social skills



Staying active (going to the gym, out for a walk, or to the library)

What other supportive treatments might help YOU in your recovery journey?

Medication Decisions

If medication is part of your treatment plan, you can participate and partner with your doctor to choose the best medication for **YOUR** needs. The following information is specific to schizophrenia medication.



Schizophrenia Medication Considerations

Talk to your doctor about:

	Your medical history		How to take the medication
	How medication could help		Financial costs
	Potential risks		Potential side effects

Schizophrenia Medication Options



Oral medications

are taken every day or several times a day and include pills, dissolvable tablets, and oral solutions.

Examples

Pills, dissolvable tablets, & oral solutions



Injectable medications

Long-acting injections are given less often than daily—for example, once or twice a month is common.

Short-acting injections can be taken daily, and often are used in crisis situations.

Talking to your doctor about these and other considerations can help you understand your options and the benefits and risks.

Making Decisions Together

Partnering, participating, and communicating with your treatment team during the recovery process are all parts of **making decisions together**. Your recovery can be more focused on your needs, your preferences, and what is most important to **YOU**.

Medication

Partnering with your doctor

Be active.

Making decisions together is about you and your doctor sharing information and building a partnership.

YOU are the **expert** on your values, experiences, preferences, and what you want out of your life and your treatment.



YOUR DOCTOR is the **expert** on mental health treatment.

Gather information.

The more information and knowledge you can bring to the partnership, the better.



Weigh the options.

Together with your doctor, consider the **PROS** and **CONS** of each medication, figure out the option most suitable for **YOUR** needs, and make an **informed decision**.

Stay involved.

Sometimes, even after you've explored your values, done the research, and considered the pros and cons of each option—there's still not a clear answer. Decisions can be difficult—so stay involved and rely on your support network.

Use a decision aid.

Decision aids are tools (booklets, group discussions, and computer-based programs) that help you work through treatment and recovery decisions. They can be helpful if you feel stuck.

Medication

Decision Worksheet

Use this worksheet to begin a conversation with your treatment team about your preferences and to make an informed decision that is best for your needs.



What decision am I facing?

Choosing a Medication

Whom do I want to participate in this decision?

- Me
- My doctor
- My therapist
- My social worker/ case manager
- Other _____
- Other _____
- My family member, spouse/partner, or friend

Values and Preferences

Think about your medical history, experiences with medication, and what your values and preferences are around this topic. Make sure to share these with your doctor and members of your treatment team.

What is important to me (my values), and what are my experiences?



What are my options?

With the help of your treatment team, you can gather information and come up with a list of options that are available to you.

	Name	Purpose
Medication A		
Medication B		
Medication C		
Not taking medication		

Pros and Cons

Work with your doctor and your support network to make an informed decision. Together, you can list the pros and cons based on your preferences and weigh your options. Use stars (★) to show how important the pro or con is to you. Five stars (★★★★★) means it matters “a lot.” No stars means “it does not matter at all.”

	 Pros	How much it matters	 Cons	How much it matters
Medication A				
Medication B				
Medication C				
Not taking medication				

Now it's time to make a decision

Which option do I prefer?

- Option A
- Option B
- Option C
- Unsure

Are my doctor and I in agreement about the medication decision?

- Yes
- No

Which option does my doctor prefer?

- Option A
- Option B
- Option C
- Unsure

If we are not in complete agreement, is there a decision we both think would be OK?

- Yes
- No

Steps for Success

- 1 If you experience side effects from the medication, talk to your doctor about options that might help you manage them.



- 2 If cost is a barrier, there may be financial support programs to help you pay for your medication.

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