

Sinclair Community College, Division of Allied Health Technologies

Health Promotion for Community Health Workers – Cardiovascular disease, stroke and cancer

Class #14 Taking Medicine

(date)

Course Objectives:

Know the most common treatments for diseases of the heart and blood vessels, heart attack and stroke, and contributing conditions like high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol, and diabetes.

Know how they can help people in the community living with heart disease or disability due to a stroke take care of themselves and prevent a second heart attack or second stroke.

Work with communities and community members to prevent heart disease, stroke, and reduce risk of cancer by encouraging healthy eating, physical activity, tobacco control, and stress reduction at the individual, family, and community level.

Show people how to take greater control over their health.

Class/Learning Objectives: By the end of this session, students will be able to:

1. Explain the reason for taking medicine as the doctor prescribed.
2. List the types of medicine that a patient should tell his/her doctor about.
3. List ways patients can remember to take medicine.
4. Discuss what patients should do if they have questions about medicines.
5. Discuss how CHWs can help people take and overcome barriers to taking their medicines.

Participants:

Instructor(s)

Students

Materials/Resources Needed:

Flipchart, markers, tape, blackboard, chalk and eraser

Handouts:

- 14-1 What CHWs Can Do to Help People Get and Take Their Medicines
- 14-2 How Do I Manage My Medicine?

Class Outline

I. Overview

II. Lesson

A. Will I Have More Than One Medicine Prescribed?

B. Will I Always Be on the Same Medication?

- C. How Should I Take My Medication?
- D. How Can I Best Be Prepared with Enough Medicine During Trips and Holidays?
- E. What Should I Do if I Can't Afford the Medicine?
- F. Should I Tell the Doctor About Other Medicines I am Taking or Other Health Problems?
- G. How Will I Learn About My Medications?

III. Summary

Plan for the Class:

I. Overview

Taking medicine isn't always as simple as swallowing a pill. Medicine can only help you if you take it as prescribed. Watch for problems and be actively involved in solving them with your doctor or healthcare team.

III. Lesson

A. Will I Have More Than One Medicine Prescribed?

Your doctor may give you one or more medicines, depending upon your particular symptoms and health problems.

Sometimes one medicine may be ordered to start with and others are added later, or you may be given two or more medicines to start.

Whatever your doctor prescribes, taking your medicine exactly as the doctor ordered is very important in preventing and treating heart disease and stroke.

B. Will I Always Be on the Same Medication?

Often the doctor has to make some minor adjustments in your medicine to be sure you are getting the amount that is most effective for you. After starting a medicine, you will be tested regularly to ensure the medicine is working. If it's not working as well as the doctor would like, you'll be prescribed a higher dose or a different medicine.

The doctor will look for the right combination of medicines that work best for you.

C. How Should I Take My Medication?

The medicines work best when taken as ordered by the doctor. Skipping a dose or stopping your medicines can be harmful. Your health may get worse if you stop your medicines. Do not stop your medicines unless you are told, even if you are feeling better. Your doctor will tell you when to stop taking a medicine.

Taking more medicine than ordered can also be harmful. Your doctor will tell you when to take more of any medication. If you are not feeling better, or are feeling worse, be sure to tell your doctor or nurse.

D. How Can I Best Be Prepared with Enough Medicine During Trips and Holidays?

Keep your medicine prescription filled at all times. If you will be away from home, be sure to take your medicine with you. Refill your prescription a few days before you run out. You should have a few extra days worth of medicine so if the weather is bad and you can't get to the drugstore, you won't run out.

E. What Should I Do if I Can't Afford the Medicine?

If the cost of your medicine is a problem, tell your doctor. There may be other medicines you can take that cost less. Some medicines have a generic form that costs less. You can also compare prices at different drugstores. Some medicines can be purchased from mail-order pharmacies. If you need help paying for medicines, ask to see a social worker while at the hospital or ask the doctor how to contact a social worker in your community. The social worker will know about programs that can help you pay for your medicine, if you qualify. Also, someone in the office or clinic may be able to help fill out forms to get you low-cost or free medicine from drug companies or through the Medicare drug card program.

F. Should I Tell the Doctor About Other Medicines I am Taking or Other Health Problems?

Yes! It is very important to tell your doctor about other medicines you are taking. You should include all pills that you take, such as aspirin, cold medicine, allergy medicine and laxatives. These are called "over-the-counter" medicines that you buy without a doctor's prescription.

Over-the-counter medicines can change the way your heart medicines work.

Also, tell your doctor about allergies you have to medicines, foods, or other products. Allergies can change what medicines may be ordered for you.

G. How Will I Learn About My Medications?

The pharmacist at the drugstore, your doctor or nurse will answer your questions about medicines. If you have a question about your medicine, the easiest way to get an answer is to ask the pharmacist where you get your medicine. Your medicine will come with information about possible side effects and warnings not to take the medicine if you have certain conditions, such as being pregnant or are allergic to certain chemicals.

Activity: Why is it important to take medicines that the doctor prescribes for you if you are at risk for or have heart disease, or had a heart attack, or stroke?

Ask the CHWs if they can think of the reasons for why it is important to take medicines the way the doctor advises.

If the following reasons are not mentioned, add these:

- Reduces the risk of developing heart disease and the risk of disability (weakness, not able to carry on normal activities) and dying from heart disease.
- Reduces the risk of stroke, the risk of disability (for example, not being able to speak or think clearly, move part of the body or walk) and the risk of dying from stroke.
- Reduces the risk of having a second heart attack or stroke and disability.
- Helps control blood pressure in people who already have high blood pressure.
- Helps control high levels of fat and cholesterol in the blood which reduces risk for a heart attack or stroke.
- Controls blood sugar and lowers the risk of developing diabetes complications like kidney disease, blindness, nerve, feet, and gum problems.
- Reduces feelings of depression and anxiety.
- Reduces the risk of death from heart failure.
- Improves the way you feel.
- Allows you to be healthy enough to work and live better.
- You will be a good role model for your family.

Activity: What are some reasons people do not take their medicines as advised by their doctors and how can CHWs help them overcome these roadblocks?

Ask the CHWs if they can think of other reasons that people don't take their medicines and how they could help. Ask them for suggestions what they would tell people and do to help them get started and to keep taking their medicine.

If the following reasons are not mentioned, add these:

- They do not know what the medicine is supposed to do.
- They are not sure of how to take their medicines.
- They can not afford their medicines and do not get them.
- To save money they only take their medicine every other day or cut their pills in half.
- They are taking so many other medicines and do not want to take any new ones.
- They feel bad.
- They feel the medicine has a side effect they do not like.
- They forget to take their medicines.

- *They think they can do without their medicines.*
- *They do not have anyone to help/support them to take their medicines.*

Handout 14-1: What CHWs Can Do to Help People Get and Take Their Medicines?

If the suggestion on this handout were not mentioned during the activity on reasons why people do not take their medicine, ask the CHWs to look at the suggestions on the handout. Will these suggestions help overcome roadblocks to taking medicine?

IV. Summary

Handout 14-2: How Do I Manage My Medicine?

The American Heart Association Handout, "How do I manage my medicine?" is a good overview of what most people need to know about taking medicines. Community Health Workers should be familiar with all the terms on this handout and what their community peers should know.

Resources:

American Heart Association: www.americanheart.org

National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute; National Institute of Health; Department of Health and Human Services. www.nhlbi.nih.gov