Help taking the tablets

‘Take two tablets daily’ – the prescription sounds simple but the reality of taking medication on a regular basis is often more complicated than may appear. Day-to-day routines can easily come between us and the medicine cabinet as can memory problems and seizures. But help is at hand. Epilepsy specialist nurse Anthony Linklater explains

Taking medication on a regular basis is fundamental to gaining the best possible seizure control for most people with epilepsy. However, many people with epilepsy do not always take their medication as prescribed, increasing the likelihood of seizures.

But we are now able to offer much greater support in helping people get the most out of their medication and maximise seizure control.

Reminders to take medication come in many different forms and they really can make a difference. At the National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery we piloted a text messaging service for people who had difficulties taking their medication. Almost 50 per cent reported a reduction in seizure frequency with the service and 25 per cent reported fewer visits to A&E.

But establishing the right support is very individual. Here we look at three key areas: developing good routines that will help you remember to take your tablets; medication aids; and digital alerts.

GOOD ROUTINES

– It can help to link taking your tablets with daily routines such as brushing your teeth, eating breakfast, lunch or dinner or even making a drink.
– Placing a post-it note on the fridge as a reminder is a good idea but permanent reminders can become too familiar and may be missed.
– Try and avoid taking your medication last thing at night as there is no opportunity to remember if you forget.
– Enlist family support or the support of someone close to you to remind you to take your tablets.
– If you know you have problems taking your medication and may be missing several doses, discuss this with your neurologist, GP or epilepsy specialist nurse. Missed doses could be contributing to poor seizure control and this should be addressed before a change in medication is considered.

MEDICATION AIDS

Drug wallets Calendar based drug wallets and pill boxes with days of the week on them are useful for helping you to organise your tablets and provide a visual reminder to take medication. Some wallets have removable compartments so that if you are going out for the day you can take that day’s medication with you. Some pill boxes have built-in alarms that alert you when your medication is due. They can also help to identify when doses are missed, which is important to know.

Always check the label or patient information leaflet that comes with your medication. Dispersible tablets that dissolve in water can’t be stored in drug wallets because they react to the air. If you have trouble taking your medication, it is always worth asking your GP or pharmacist whether it comes in an easier form of packaging.

At the end of this article is a list of some companies that sell medication aids and there are plenty more to choose from online.

DIGITAL ALERTS

Mobile phones If you have a mobile phone it might be worth setting alarms/reminders for taking your tablets throughout the day.

Epilepsy Toolkit app Epilepsy Society’s free app on the iPhone now has an alarm which can be programmed to remind you to take your tablets. You can also record the name, dosage and a picture of your tablets. The Epilepsy Toolkit app can be downloaded at ‘App Store’ on the iPhone.

Useful addresses

The following organisations and companies offer a range of medication aids for you to choose from. We do not endorse these companies.

www.epilepsysociety.org.uk/shop
01494 601 392

www.dudleyhunt.co.uk
01796 482 105

www.mobilitysmart.cc
0800 567 7222

www.tabtime.com
01270 767 207

www.procterhealthcare.co.uk
01323 417 508

www.yellowcross.co.uk
01252 820 321

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