

Information From The Experts

In Treatment

Tips for taking your oral cancer therapy as directed

Taking your oral cancer therapy as directed by your doctor will help you get the most benefit from your treatment. Not taking your medicine as instructed could mean that your treatment will not work the way it should.

There are 4 things that are important for you to know about your oral cancer therapy before you start taking it:

- ▶ The name of the medicine
- ▶ The dose
- ▶ How your medicine should be taken
- ▶ The schedule (when to take your medicine)

Ask your doctor or health care provider to explain:

- ▶ Why this treatment is being prescribed
- ▶ How long you will be on this treatment
- ▶ What the possible side effects are
- ▶ What you can do to manage side effects if they occur

Some people taking oral therapies have found it helpful to know the answers to the following questions:

- ▶ What should I do if I miss a dose?
- ▶ Can I chew the pill instead of swallowing it?
- ▶ Can I split the pill in half or quarters?
- ▶ Can I crush the pill and mix it with food?
- ▶ Are there special handling instructions?
- ▶ How should I store the medicine?

It can be hard to remember to take medication, especially if you are taking more than one medicine at different times each day. Here are some suggestions that have worked for other people:

- ▶ Create a routine that fits your lifestyle.
- ▶ Fill out a check list.
- ▶ Ask your doctor or nurse for a personalised treatment calendar that lists the dates and times the medication needs to be taken.
- ▶ Use a pill box and take it with you when you go out.
- ▶ Set an alarm.
- ▶ Leave yourself a note where you will see it.
- ▶ Keep your medicine in a place where you will see it.
- ▶ Ask a relative or friend to call and remind you.
- ▶ Take your oral therapy at the same time every day.
- ▶ Make a habit of taking your oral therapy with other daily habits like brushing your teeth.
- ▶ If you attend a support group, ask others how they remember to take their pills.

There may be other challenges to taking oral cancer therapy, such as scheduling when to take your medication, or taking it with certain foods and avoiding taking it with other foods. Experiencing side effects from your treatment can also affect your desire to continue taking your oral cancer therapy. Be sure to consult with your doctor or nurse and let them know about any problems you are having with taking your medicine as directed. They can offer tips to make taking your medicine easier, or help you find an approach that fits with your needs and lifestyle so that you can get the full benefit of your cancer therapy.