



IS MY CHILD TAKING THEIR MEDICATION?

I wonder if my child is taking their psychiatric medication as prescribed?

Medication can be an important part of your child's care but many children and youth can find it difficult to take medication. There are many possible reasons your child may not take their medication. These reasons may include:

- a belief they do not need the medication
- how the medication makes them feel, or experiencing uncomfortable side effects of the medication
- fear of choking while taking medication or difficulty swallowing medication
- stigma related to taking medication
- not understanding what the medication is for
- self-harm or suicidal thinking (i.e. stockpiling medication to make a suicide attempt by overdose)
- selling/trading the medication for money, substances or goods

Signs your child may not be taking their medication as prescribed

- symptoms worsening or not getting better in expected time frame
- complaining about medication, reluctance to take medication or asking to change or stop the medication
- avoids taking medication in your presence
- going to bedroom/bathroom/garbage/sink directly after taking medication
- finding medication on the floor/bedding/furniture/clothing/garbage/sink
- medication supply not consumed as expected (i.e. medication bottles are still full after several days/weeks)
- decreased frequency of filling prescriptions

The above signs can happen for other reasons and do not always indicate that a child is not taking their medication.

What to do if you suspect your child is not taking their medication

- have a conversation with your child about medication. Discuss their beliefs and feelings about the medication (e.g. What do you think about the medication you are taking? How does your medication make you feel?)
- meet with your child and the physician or care team together to discuss medication concerns
- ask your pharmacist, nurse or physician if the medication can be opened, split or crushed or if a liquid or dissolving form of the medication is available
- directly observe your child taking their medication
- ask to check their hands, mouth and under their tongue to make sure all medications have been swallowed
- after your child takes their medication have them drink water or talk with them for a couple of minutes

The above are only some possible reasons why your child may not be taking their medication as prescribed. Uncovering the reason(s) behind why your child may not be taking medication is an important issue that you, your child and your healthcare team need to work together to understand.

Developed by the health care professionals of the Child & Adolescent Mental Health Programs and reviewed by the staff of the Kelty Mental Health Resource Centre