



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. Children and youth may not take their medication if they:

- Believe they do not need the medication
- Dislike how the medication makes them feel, or experience uncomfortable side effects
- Are afraid of choking while taking medication, or have trouble swallowing medication
- Worry about stigma around taking medication
- Do not understand what the medication is for
- Plan to self-harm or have suicidal thoughts (such as saving medication to make a suicide attempt by overdose)
- Are selling or trading their medication for money, substances or goods



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.



Signs your child may not be taking their medication as prescribed

- Symptoms worsen or do not improve in the expected time frame
- Your child complains about their medication, is reluctant to take their medication, or asks to change or stop their medication
- Your child goes to a bedroom, bathroom, garbage, or sink right after taking medication
- Your child avoids taking medication in front of you
- You find medication on the floor, or in bedding, furniture, clothing, the garbage, or a sink
- Your child's medication supply lasts longer than expected (medication bottles are still full after several days or weeks)
- You fill their prescriptions less often

The above signs can happen for other reasons and do not always indicate that your 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, and ask what they think and feel (for example, What do you think about the medication you are taking? How does your medication make you feel?)
- Meet with your child and their doctor or care team to discuss your concerns
- Ask your pharmacist, nurse or doctor if the medication is available in another form (for example, if pills can be opened and split or crushed, or if the medication comes in a liquid or dissolving form)
- Directly observe your child taking their medication
- Ask to check your child's hands, mouth, and under their tongue to make sure they have swallowed all medications
- After your child takes their medication, have them drink water or talk with them for a couple of minutes