**Need help remembering medication?**

*Make this a healthy habit.*

A big health challenge we face globally are non-communicable diseases (NCDs) which include cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic lung disease and various cancers. In fact, these NCDs are now the leading cause of death and disability in the world.

At Vitality, we follow the Oxford Health Alliance’s 4:4:60 model which shows that there are four main risk factors (poor diet, physical inactivity, smoking and excessive alcohol intake) that lead to four chronic diseases that then cause 60% of deaths.

Our goal is to help prevent these diseases through heathier habits like getting more active and eating healthier food. This approach is called ‘prevention as treatment’ and it goes a long way in reducing your risk for these diseases – helping you to improve not only your lifespan but your ‘healthspan’ which is the number of years you’ll live in good health as you get older.

**But, what about when you also need to take medication?**

A crucial part of healthier living is having regular checks to assess your health risks by measuring blood pressure, cholesterol, glucose, weight and your waist circumference. By doing one simple Vitality Health Check each year, you get to see these metrics first-hand and can better understand your risk of a wide range of lifestyle diseases.

Together with your doctor, you can then come up with a plan of action to lower your risk through follow-up tests or by them prescribing any medication you may need to manage these conditions.

“When it comes to medication,” says Dr Deepak Patel, Vitality South Africa Clinician, “a lot of this efficacy is tied to our behaviour as the ‘patient’. For starters, we need to take medication in the way that it is prescribed by a healthcare professional: this means the right medication in the right dose at the right time. This ensures that the medication works how it’s meant to.”

But, adds Dr Patel, this isn’t always easy for us to get right. “As with anything to do with behaviour change, which we spend a lot of time researching here at Vitality, we need to make medication adherence a habit: a healthy habit”.

“We launched our Vitality Habit Index earlier this year which looks at how to make healthy habits more sustainable when it comes to better fitness, sleep, nutrition – and the same foundations can be applied when it comes to correctly taking our medication.”

**Build a medication routine﻿**

A common complaint when it comes to medication is remembering to take it. As you juggle the day-to-day demands and distractions of life, here are some helpful tips on how you can build a medication routine through simple reminders.

1. **Set a repeat alarm**

Have a daily alarm that goes off, either on your phone, computer or through a smart home device, at a time when you’re most likely to be home.

1. **Put a post-it on the fridge**

This will serve as a reminder when you’re making breakfast/dinner (or put the post-it close to the kettle if you’re a tea or coffee drinker!)

1. **Use a calendar**

Mark your daily doses in a diary or in a notebook that you carry around with you – or try out an app-based version if you prefer to go digital.

1. **Pair a habit**

We all have morning or evening routines that are already established – and most people take their medication at one, or both, of these times. That’s why it can be a good idea to pair habits, for example, every time you brush your teeth, pair this with taking your medication.

1. **Create a support system**

If you have friends or family also taking chronic medication, form a buddy system to check in on each other in quick, convenient ways. This is also helpful so that you feel encouraged and supported on your health journey.

1. **Pick a pillbox**

“And lastly: organise your medications with a pillbox”, adds Dr Patel. “These are marked with the day of the week and indicate time of day with AM or PM. They are particularly useful if you have multiple medications to take each day, so that you don’t forget what you need to take and when”.

**Habits for better health**

Use the reminders that work best for you to make these routines daily habits. Also, make sure you’ve checked if your medications require specific timing instructions, for example, before or after meals and always consult with your doctor or pharmacist when in doubt.

**Keen to explore more?**

Read our new [Vitality Habit Index](https://www.vitalityglobal.com/globalvitalityconference/#vhi).

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