

Tips for Managing Multiple Medications



I recently had the opportunity to join an episode of [Ask an MS Expert](#) to talk about an underrecognized challenge of living with MS: polypharmacy, which can be defined as taking five or more medications per day.

When we say medications, we are not just talking about prescriptions or other traditional medicines, we are also talking about any over-the-counter (OTC) medicines, herbal therapies, vitamins and more. Any agent that someone takes to treat a condition or for better health is included when we talk about polypharmacy. For those with MS, polypharmacy is common.

In 2022, [University of British Columbia researchers conducted a study finding](#) that 1 in 4 people living with MS take five or more medications per day. That study also found that 1 in 20 were taking 10 or more medications per day.

In addition to their disease-modifying therapy, many people with MS treat symptomatic issues they may have as well. We commonly see those affected by MS coping with depression, spasticity, bowel and bladder issues, and more. While we know there is no silver-bullet medication that will treat several comorbid conditions, it is important to pull in those comorbid conditions that commonly affect those with MS alongside their DMTs that treat the disease state of MS.

Here are three key tips for managing your medications that will help you and your care team:

1. Make sure your medication list is up to date with your provider, your pharmacist, care

partner(s) and that this list is always somewhere on you. Remember, medications also include OTCs, vitamins, etc., and be sure to talk about any medications that you are no longer taking

2. Ask questions about your medications with your provider and pharmacist
3. Make sure you take each medicine as prescribed and let your care team know of any side-effects you may be experiencing, as adherence to your regimen is vital

In addition to the wonderful individuals on your care team, there are things you can do to help track your medications:

1. Pill boxes: make sure they are filled at the beginning of each week to ensure you are staying on top of your medicines
2. Set timers for medication time: there are applications you can download on your phone to remind you when it is time to take a medication
3. Resources at your pharmacy such as pamphlets or calendars for prescriptions
4. [MS Navigators®](#) can also help you make sure that you find the right avenue for sticking to your medications

Remember that communication equals success and that teams work best when they work together.

Editor's Note: Watch the full episode of the polypharmacy [Ask an MS Expert here.](#)