



Medication education for speech-language pathologists

Key things to know

- Adverse drug events (ADEs) are injuries caused by taking medication incorrectly, side-effects, or allergic reactions.
- Thousands of people in the US die each year from ADEs.
- In 2006, three million older adults were in nursing homes due to difficulty managing their medicines.
- Every year, the US could prevent 1.5 million ADEs.

SLP scope of practice and scope of license

- Activities related to medication education are in our scope of practice.
- Our state scope of license may limit some of these activities.
- ASHA and CMS (Medicare & Medicaid) expect us to collaborate.

9 ways home health clinicians can help

1. Ensure accurate medication reconciliation between what the MD orders and what the patient is actually taking.
2. Use software to identify adverse drug interactions.
3. Assist patient to obtain the medications. (Enlist family help; home delivery; medication discount programs)
4. Educate patients regarding their medication using explicit, organized, and understandable material.
5. Teach patient to use a medication chart or other tool.
6. Modify the medication system to accommodate vision or manual dexterity issues.
7. Compensate for cognitive difficulties.
8. Involve patients with decision-making to improve self-efficacy and adherence.
9. Monitor patients over time.

A deeper dive into the SLP's role

1. Identify and address communication, cognitive, and physical barriers

Ask your patient to:

- Show you their medication and explain how they take them.
- Tell you what their medication is for.
- Explain what side-effects they're watching for.
- Tell you what they'd do if they missed a dose or took too much.
- Explain how they get refills.

Observe:

- If they're using a pill box, are they current with taking their doses?
- Are their medications organized?
- Do we see any loose pills on the table or floor?

Depending on the physical barrier, we may be able to address it directly, or we may collaborate with PT or OT.

Screen or assess your patient's ability to:

- Get their medication and water.
- Read medication labels.
- Open pill containers and manipulate pills.
- Swallow pills.
- Order and obtain refills.

2. Use resources to assist our patients to understand their medication

- Collaborate with the patient's nurse or physician, or your nurse educator, to ensure that you understand what to teach to your patient.
- Use your EMR or online resources to help you understand. With more than 10,000 drugs available, no one is an expert on medication without access to tools.

3. Develop and teach strategies to improve adherence to medication routines

Ask yourself these questions:

- Would your patient benefit from better organization of the medication?
- Are the pills kept in an accessible but safe place?
- Can you introduce a pill box that might be more helpful?
- Would your patient benefit from an alarm?
- If your patient has low vision, you could try rubber bands on the bottles to differentiate them.

(Loehr & Malone, 2018)

Therapy ideas:

- "Create a hierarchy for teaching how to fill pill planner. Use different colored/shaped beads."
- "Take photos of patient's medication. Have patient match pill to photo that includes a label/description".
- "Ask your local pharmacist for empty pill bottles to use for practice with your patients".

(Loehr & Malone, 2018)

Recommended reading

Marek, K. and L. Antle. "[Medication Management of the Community-Dwelling Older Adult](#)". In: Hughes RG, editor. Patient Safety and Quality: An Evidence-Based Handbook for Nurses. Rockville (MD): Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (US); 2008 Apr. Chapter 18. Available from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK2670/>

See full post for more information: [SLPs play an important role in home health medication education.](#)
<https://eatspeakthink.com/slps-play-important-role-home-health-medication-education>