

Helping people with dementia who may be refusing to take their medication

As with any of the behavioural and psychological symptoms of dementia (BPSD), it is always important to explore *why* difficulties such as resistiveness to taking medications is occurring. It is important to remember that the fluctuating cognition (level of understanding) of a person with dementia means that **a strategy that does not prove effective today, may work tomorrow.**

A person-centred approach is always needed.

The following tips may assist carers in this area:

<i>Identify the best time of the day for the person</i>	Can medication administration be changed to this time?
<i>Note activities that help facilitate an optimal mood for the client</i>	e.g. favourite music, food, drink, activity etc.
<i>Enable the person to take the medication themselves</i>	This may be less confronting and more empowering (the carer can observe discreetly).
<i>Avoid body language that could be perceived by the person as threatening</i>	Avoid rushing the person, and use a calm, reassuring manner. Affirming actions may include: Sitting down at the same level as the person, allow the person to maintain their personal space or using the person's name when speaking to them
<i>Enable the person to recognise the carer and feel a sense of trust.</i>	Orientate them to who you are and ensure they feel comfortable before attempting to assist with the medication, otherwise the person could feel threatened and become defensive. Another carer may need to administer the medication, or try again a little later.
<i>Provide the person with an opportunity to understand what is being asked of them.</i>	Carers may need to consider the words they are using and consider the need for visual prompts if the person does not appear to be responding verbal instruction.
<i>Review by GP and Pharmacist to determine the ongoing importance of all medications.</i>	This may allow the total number of medications to be reduced. Also, the type or form of the medication could be changed for ease of administration eg rather than tablet form, perhaps liquid, wafer or transdermal patch may make a difference.
<i>Document medication administration information</i>	This is important to ensure effective communication and consistency of practice for other carers. Report any problems to the GP and/or regular pharmacist.