



## The consumer's guide to finding good medication management apps

Seems like there's an app for everything these days!

Mobile applications or “apps” can now be used to help manage many aspects of daily life, from finances to health. Today's health apps range from helping users eat healthier, to tracking their daily habits, looking up symptoms, or providing daily motivation tips. Apps can even be used to help you manage your medications. If you have a chronic condition, or take a number of medications, apps can be a great tool to help you keep track of your meds.

### What are medication management apps, and how can they help me?

Apps are programs that you can download for use on mobile phones and tablets. While these apps can help you take your medication as directed, they vary in the features they offer and some are more helpful than others. With the number of apps growing, it can be tough to select one that is right for you.

This guide tells you what to look for—and what to look out for—when picking and using a medication management app. (The Script Your Future campaign cannot endorse or promote a specific app or product. These tips are to be used as guidance when selecting an app to help with medication management.)

### How do medication management apps work?

The purpose of medication management apps is to help you take your medication(s) as directed. Once you download a medication management app (from places like iTunes or Google Play), you are often asked to input information about all the meds you are taking, including the dose (how much), how often, and when you take them. The apps usually offer an alert or reminder for you to take each medication.

### Are medication management apps regulated by the FDA?

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) does not intend to regulate medication management apps. For more information, visit the [FDA's website](http://fda.gov) (fda.gov).

### Tips for selecting a medication management app

If you are looking at a medication management app that just includes basic features, and not more complex ones, the app should be free. Apps with additional features may cost money.

### Things to look for in a medication management app:

#### *Basic Features*

**Security** - Apps often store your private, personal information. Be sure to pick an app that has these security features:

- A log-in that requires a password to access private health information.
- A disclaimer that private user information will not be shared with third parties (including family members and health care professionals) unless you give your permission.
- The app should not ask you for identifying information, such as your social security number.

**Reminders** - Reminders, often sent as alerts, remind you when to take your medications according to the times you have set.

- The best systems let you indicate that you have taken the medication, need to delay taking the medication, or have stopped taking the medication altogether.
- Make sure that the reminder is in a format that works for you. The best apps let you choose between a text, email, or alarm. Think about your habits when choosing the kind of alert. For example, if you are often out of Wi-Fi range, an alarm that requires a Wi-Fi connection to send a reminder would not be a good choice. Or if your cell phone service includes a limited number of text messages, you might opt for a different type of reminder.
- Make sure that if you choose a phone alarm as a reminder system that it goes off no matter what else you are doing on the phone or whether your phone is set on silent. For example, if you are playing a game, the alarm should not wait until you close your game app before going off.

### **Personalizing Information**

- You should be able to input medication in the form of pills, inhalers, injections, liquids, or some other form.
- Some medication management apps only allow a certain number of medications, which is not helpful if you are taking many medications or if you are managing medications for more than one family member.

### **“Notes” Field**

- You should be able to note who prescribed the medication and your pharmacy’s information.
- You should be able to input medication-specific information, such as directions about taking the medication with food or possible side effects.

### **Functionality (or usability)**

- Make sure the app is available for your particular type of smart phone or tablet.

***Additional features may be helpful in a medication management app (and may involve a fee):***

### **Tracking missed doses**

- Apps that let you record whether you have taken or missed doses and use visual reports to track your progress can help you identify times and places when you tend not to take your medications.

### **Sharing information with health care providers and family caregivers**

- Apps that let you email, print, or export your prescriptions and habits can help make it easier to share this information with health care providers and family caregivers.
- Some apps allow your health care providers, with your permission, to update your medication regimen on your app and send you information automatically, which can be helpful when you need to make changes.

### Dose limits

- Some medications have strict dose limits. For example, for pain medications with acetaminophen, it is important to not take more than directed. Apps that monitor the dose limits you input can be helpful to make sure you don't take too much. These apps can adjust next dose reminders according to when you indicate you took your last dose, rather than on a strict "every X hours" type schedule, which could be harmful if you ended up taking your last dose late.

### Options for caregivers

- If you manage the medications of one or more family members, some apps allow you to organize medication information and schedules for multiple family members.

### Other reminders

- Some apps incorporate medication reminders that involve more than just an alert when it's time to take your next medicine. Some examples include:
  - An alert when your medication is about to run out and it needs to be refilled.
  - An alert when your prescription is about to expire and you need to schedule a prescription renewal appointment.

### Reminders for more complicated medication schedules

- For medication schedules that are more complicated, make sure your medication management app works for your needs. Some examples include:
  - Medications taken on an "as needed" schedule but with strict dose limits.
  - Medications taken "every X days" rather than every day.
  - Medications taken in groups. For example, "lunchtime meds" or "bedtime meds."

### Medication database

- These apps access a database of medications that allow you to enter, search, and select medications. This feature can save time and improve accuracy when entering your medication's name and schedule.

### Accessing the app online

- Some apps have a companion website that allows you to input information from a computer and sync it to your smart phone or tablet.

**Make sure the app you pick works for you and makes it easier to manage your medications. Always ask your health care professional if you have questions about when and how to take your medication. Medication management apps can help you take care of your health by helping you take your medication as directed.**



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