

Many medicaid patients skip drugs that could prevent heart trouble

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Simple measures can keep patients on track, researchers say.

(HealthDay) -- Many Medicaid recipients with chronic health conditions that can lead to heart disease -- diabetes, high blood pressure and high cholesterol -- do not take their prescribed medications, a new study has found.

The researchers said failure to take medications leads to higher costs of care and an increased risk of hospitalization and even death.

They looked at 2008 and 2009 data from more than 150,000 [Medicaid patients](#) in New York City, aged 20 to 64, and found that only 63 percent of those with the three chronic conditions took their prescribed medications. Older patients and white and [Asian patients](#) were most likely to take their medications, while black and Hispanic patients were

least likely.

"The outcome of this study is concerning, as it shows a large number of people with chronic conditions that lead to cardiovascular disease aren't taking prescribed medications, which could prevent a potential stroke or heart attack," lead author Dr. Kelly Kyanko, an instructor in the department of population health at the NYU Langone Medical Center, said in a center news release.

"We hope these findings will help local [health authorities](#) in the New York City area address this problem by creating programs to increase adherence rates, specifically in patient populations most at risk," Kyanko added.

The study was published online recently in the *Journal of Urban Health*.

"We believe that patients and their doctors can work to improve [medication adherence](#) through simple measures such as switching to once-a-day or combination pills, keeping a pill box and obtaining 90-day refills instead of 30-day refills for medications they take on a regular basis," Kyanko said.

High-risk patients may require more intensive interventions, such as working with a nurse or pharmacist to ensure they take their [prescribed medications](#), she added.

Cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death both in New York and in the United States, according to the release.

More information: The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention outlines ways to [prevent heart disease](#).

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