

Many Americans earn low grades for proper med use: survey

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On average, adults over 40 with chronic conditions only score a C, one-third get a D or F.

(HealthDay)—Americans get an average of C+ on the proper use of medications, and one in seven even gets an F, a new report card shows.

Released by a pharmacists group on Tuesday, the report card was based on the findings of a [national survey](#) of more than 1,000 adults, aged 40 and older, who have received a prescription for a [chronic medical condition](#).

The participants were asked nine questions: whether or not in the past 12 months they failed to fill a prescription; neglected to have a prescription refilled; missed a dose; took a lower dose than prescribed; took a higher dose than prescribed; stopped a prescription early; took an old

medication for a new problem without consulting a doctor; took someone else's medicine; or forgot whether they'd taken a medication.

On average, the participants earned a C+ in terms of taking their medication properly. One in seven—the equivalent of more than 10 million adults—were given an F. Overall, one-third of respondents received either a D or F.

The report card grades may underestimate the problem because some people are unlikely to admit to improper use of medications, the National Community Pharmacists Association (NCPA) noted.

The degree of personal connection with a [pharmacist](#) or pharmacy staff was the biggest predictor of proper use of medications. Patients of independent community pharmacies had the highest level of [personal connection](#) (89 percent agreeing that pharmacist or staff 'knows you pretty well'), followed by large chains (67 percent) and mail order (36 percent).

Other factors associated with proper medication use were: whether medications were affordable; whether there was continuity in patients' health care usage; whether patients felt it was important to take their medication as prescribed; how well-informed patients felt about their health; and drug side effects.

"Proper prescription [drug use](#) can improve patient health outcomes and lower [health care costs](#), so anything less than an A on medication adherence is concerning," B. Douglas Hoey, CEO of the NCPA, said in an association news release.

"Pharmacists can help patients and caregivers overcome barriers to effectively and consistently follow medication regimens. Indeed, independent [community pharmacists](#) in particular may be well-suited to

boost patient adherence given their close connection with patients and their caregivers," Hoey added.

More information: The U.S. National Institute of General Medical Sciences has more about [taking medicines](#).

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