

FIRST TRY

NP: Managing your medications for HIV can be complicated, with different pills at different times of day. How are you doing with that?

PATIENT: It has been pretty challenging.

NP: Oh. Well, you know it's very important to take all of your medications in exactly the way they're prescribed. It may be a challenge, but you have to make the effort.

PATIENT: I know. But some days I forget that second dose. It's just so hard, with everything else I have to deal with! They raised my rent again and I'm not sure if I'll have to move. I can hardly sleep with worrying.

NP: Well, I understand that it's difficult. But you don't want to have to worry about your health getting worse, on top of everything else.

PATIENT: Look, I'm taking the medication as much as I can. Why does it matter so much? My other doctor never gives me a hard time about my heart pills.

NP: This is a very different kind of medication. You have to understand that taking only some of your medication is OK for many diseases, but not for HIV. If you take only some of your medication that gives the virus the chance to adapt to it, so that the medication eventually stops working for you. Not only that, but the virus may become resistant to all medications of that type! And there are still only a few types of treatments available for HIV, so if you're not careful you can pretty quickly run out of options.

PATIENT: Oh. Well, I never thought of those things.

NP: Also, if you develop a treatment-resistant strain of HIV, you can pass it along to other people. So it's not just a risk for you, it's a public health issue too!

PATIENT: I didn't know that either.

NP: You want to stay healthy, right!?

PATIENT (*quietly*): Yes.

NP: OK, then! So are you going to take your medication all the time from now on?

PATIENT: I guess I'll try.

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SECOND TRY

NP: Managing your medications for HIV can be complicated, with different pills at different times of day. How are you doing with that?

PATIENT: It has been pretty challenging.

NP: It has been a challenge for you. What are the challenges?

PATIENT: Well, some days I forget that second dose. It's just so hard, with everything else I have to deal with! They raised my rent again and I'm not sure if I'll have to move. I can hardly sleep with worrying.

NP: You're worried about so many other things, it's hard to remember your medication.

PATIENT: Yes, that's it! I have other priorities.

NP: It's true, there is a lot on your plate. Now, you also mentioned that the problem is mainly the second dose. What makes the first dose easier to take?

PATIENT: I just wake up in the morning and take it, first thing. The pill bottle is right on my bathroom sink, so it reminds me. By evening I'm thinking about other things. Anyway, does it really matter about the second dose? If I miss a dose of my heart pills I just get back on schedule the next day.

NP: Well, this is a very different kind of medication. Taking only some of your medication gives the virus a chance to adapt, so treatment could eventually stop working.

PATIENT: But I'm taking it in the mornings all the time!

NP: I apologize; I wasn't trying to criticize. I just want to make sure you know what the risks are – this is your decision, and you have to choose your priorities.

PATIENT: Oh, I understand that. I don't want to take chances with my health.

NP: That's not a risk you want to take.

PATIENT: No. I have enough problems to deal with right now!

NP: Mm-hmm. So, what would you like to do at this point?

PATIENT: I need to get back on track. I can write myself a note to help remember.

NP: Great. Now, let's talk about some of the other problems you mentioned

THIRD TRY

NP: Managing your medications for HIV can be complicated, with different pills at different times of day. How are you doing with that?

PATIENT: It has been pretty challenging.

NP: OK, many people do find that to be true. Please tell me about the challenges.

PATIENT: Well, some days I forget that second dose. It's just so hard, with everything else I have to deal with! They raised my rent again and I'm not sure if I'll have to move. I can hardly sleep with worrying.

NP: You've got a lot on your mind.

PATIENT: You can say that again! And I guess I wonder why it even matters.

NP: Tell me what you're thinking.

PATIENT: Well, if I miss a dose of my heart pills I just get back on schedule the next day. Why isn't this the same?

NP: That's true about heart medications. HIV medications are different from most others, because the virus can adapt if you take only some of the pills, and could become resistant to that treatment. You're looking concerned – it seems like you didn't know that risk.

PATIENT: No, I never heard that ... But you know, everything is so hard right now! I don't have enough money, and my landlord keeps raising the rent, and I can't sleep

NP: I'm certainly not trying to harass you. You do have a lot to deal with. I could prescribe you something for the sleep problem if you want, and you could speak with the social worker here in the clinic to see if we can help with the other issues.

PATIENT: Well, thank you. I do want to take my medication, it's just hard.

NP: It really can be hard. So, where do we go from here?

PATIENT: I'll take you up on that offer, and I'll write a note to help me remember the evening dose.