Did I forget to take my pill again? Does it really matter?

YES! It DOES matter if you don't take your medication!

On average, half of the people with chronic illnesses like heart disease or asthma skip their medication doses or otherwise mess up their medications! NOT taking your medicines can lead to:

- Unnecessary pain
- Loss of good health
- Nursing home stays
- Hospitalization
- Death

Don't fool around with your health or the health of those you care for!

Here are some ways people use to remember their medications:

- ✓ Use a weekly pillbox – a box with seven separate compartments for the days of the week. Sometimes the boxes also have slots for 4 different times of day: morning, noon, late afternoon, and bedtime.

- ✓ Take medications at the same time every day so it becomes a routine.

- ✓ Link taking medicines with a particular activity, such as brushing your teeth. This will help you remember that it's time to take your pills.

- ✓ Keep a written record of what medications you take and when and take the record to your doctor appointments. This way the doctor can check if a planned new drug will interact badly with an existing one.

Understand WHY you, or the person you support, are taking a pill before you leave the doctor's office by asking detailed these questions:
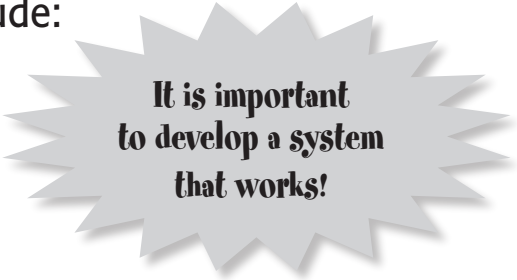
- ✓ How and when do I take this?

- ✓ When do I quit?

✓ What food, drink, other medicines or activities should I avoid while using this medicine?

✓ Should it be taken with, before, or after meals?

✓ What is it supposed to do?

✓ How do I know if it's working?

✓ What possible side effects should I look for?

✓ What do I do if I have those?

✓ What if I forget or take too many pills?

If you still don't understand why you should take the medicine, ask your pharmacist. There may be large-print instructions or translations in languages other than English.

To get the most benefit and to reduce potential risks, **you must take medications as directed**. Organizing your medications can be difficult, especially if you take several medications each day, at different times, and with different instructions. Two common concerns when managing medication include:

❶ Keeping track of multiple medications.

❷ Remembering whether or not a medication has been taken.

It is important to develop a system that works!

Whatever system you choose, include the following information:

✓ Medication Name and Purpose (what is the medication used for?)

✓ Color and Shape

✓ Directions (how should medication be taken?)

✓ Times (when should medication be taken?)

✓ Pharmacy source (where do you get the medication? A local pharmacy, mail in pharmacy, other?)