

Medication

A D H E R E N C E

CHANGES IN THE **SIZE, SHAPE, AROMA, AND COLOR** OF PILLS CAN OFTEN CONFUSE PATIENTS, SOMETIMES KEEPING THEM FROM TAKING IMPORTANT MEDICATION.



If a patient is confused about how their medication looks, the best thing to do is to **talk to a pharmacist.**

Individuals who have been taking a medication for months or even years often become accustomed to its look, smell and even taste. So imagine the **confusion when its appearance suddenly changes** from one refill to the next.

Studies have shown that many patients let confusion over a medication's new look or dislike for its smell or taste keep them from taking it.

Generic versions of brand-name prescription drugs may have the same medicinal effect on patients, but their **appearance is often quite different.**

U.S. trademark laws

don't allow generic drugs to look exactly the same as another drug already on the market, according to the Generic Pharmaceutical Association.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), non-adherence to medication can be attributed to half of all treatment failures and

125,000 deaths annually

A study published in the Annals of Internal Medicine found that patients who take generic drugs that differ in color are **50 percent more likely to stop taking the drug**, leading to possible negative reactions.

The size, shape, aroma, color and inscription on the pill may vary depending on what the pharmacy has in stock. For example, the antidepressant brand-name drug Prozac has ten different generic equivalent products, but each is different in appearance.

OTHER IMPORTANT STEPS THAT INDIVIDUALS CAN TAKE TO REDUCE THE RISK OF INCONSISTENT MEDICATION USE:

1.

CHECK THE FACTS Take the time to look at medication before leaving a pharmacy. Check the medication's packaging to verify the patient's name, address and date of birth. This will ensure that the medication purchased belongs to the right person.

2.

LOOK AT THE MEDICATION Open the bottle and look at the medication to see if it has the same appearance as previous prescriptions. If there is concern about its appearance then consult the pharmacist. Also, the medication's label often describes what the medication should look like including its color, size, shape and possible inscriptions (such as numbers).

For more information on pill appearance, visit premierhealthnet.com/familyhealth

SOURCES: Anne Nestor, MD, Trenton Family Medicine; Annals of Internal Medicine; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC); Generic Pharmaceutical Association; Institute for Safe Medication Practices