

What is Adherence?

Adherence has to do with how well individuals follow medical guidelines and their doctor's orders for health-related activities such as:

- Participating regularly in wellness programs,
- Obtaining timely health screenings as per recommended guidelines,
- Following their doctor's orders for medications, self-care, treatments, follow-ups, etc.

Many experts distinguish between adherence to '**wellness and screening**' activities and '**medication and treatment**' activities. The former applies mostly to the 'apparently healthy' but potentially 'at-risk' population (i.e. they may have medical conditions like diabetes but may not be aware, or may be ignoring mild symptoms). The latter applies to those who are 'newly diagnosed' or 'in treatment' for various medical conditions (i.e. they may have been diagnosed with high cholesterol, but may not be taking it seriously because they are not experiencing any symptoms).

Wellness and Screening Adherence:

Programs that improve wellness, such as exercise, weight management, stress management and smoking cessation are slowing the onset of chronic illnesses and improving quality of life. However, participation is not as high as desired, and by intervening intelligently we can significantly increase and maintain participation in these programs.

In conjunction with wellness programs, especially for the 'at-risk' population, timely screenings for age and gender related diseases can catch emerging diseases early. Treatment and management of the diseases can then begin early, when the costs are much lower, rather than waiting for the diseases to become more advanced. While this is well understood, in reality it is not well-applied: for example, more than 30 percent of those who have high blood pressure don't even know that they have it, and similarly for other chronic conditions like diabetes, cholesterol, etc.

Medication and Treatment Adherence:

Once diagnosed, proper medication & treatment can arrest the natural progression of diseases and in turn, delay or even prevent complications. Large medical claims can thus be avoided. Additional savings accrue because of reduced absenteeism, faster recovery times and quicker return to work. Improved management of disease arrests progression to impairments and disabilities, and thus reduces disability insurance (short-term and long-term) payouts. Improved longevity delays life insurance payouts as well.

In practice, overall adherence is only around 50 percent, leaving a lot of room for improvement. Through timely, frequent, proactive and highly personalized interventions, PurpleTeal influences members to improve adherence in all these areas.