

### Adherence tips

Simple forgetfulness is a common reason for missing doses of anti-HIV drugs, and this can cause them to fail. If you do forget to take your medication don't be too hard on yourself, but do try to learn from the experience. If you are missing doses consistently, then discuss this with your doctor. It may be possible to make your schedule easier, or change to a more suitable combination.

#### Keeping a diary

Confusion over which pills to take, when, and when food can be eaten or is to be avoided, may be a problem when starting a new combination. To avoid this, your doctor or pharmacist can provide a written daily schedule with your prescription, which you can tick off after taking your dose. Some pharmacists offer stickers for medication containers which have the same function.

#### Jogging your memory

If the problem seems to be about needing a reminder, then you might find a timer or alarmed watch useful. There are some with programmable alarms and they are available at several high street retailers.

The alarms are stored in memory so the watch does not have to be reset every day and an eight letter message can be set to scroll across the watch face with an audible alarm. Computer scheduling programmes can also be adapted for this purpose.

You can also get hold of a pillbox with a timer. Useful if you have one set of pills that has to be taken every twelve hours and another every eight hours.

#### Storing & transporting pills

Make sure that the box you're getting is big enough and that you have checked with your

pharmacist that all your drugs are suitable for storing out of their original container.

Some pills deteriorate if not properly kept. The bottle that indinavir (Crixivan) comes in, for instance, contains small canisters that keep the capsules dry and stop them from leaking. You could also use a film canister.

Some people keep doses in the different places that they could be at when pill-taking time comes around, e.g. friend's house, handbag, car. Make sure you store medication safely out of the reach of children, and remember that extreme temperatures can damage most medications.

#### Overcoming difficulties

For some people, taking the pills can be a problem depending on their size, shape and texture. Always mention problems to your HIV pharmacist.

There may be another preparation of the medication available, e.g. a liquid or powder that you might find easier to take than a pill.

Using a pill crusher can make some pills easier to take. These are available from your HIV pharmacist who will advise you if it is suitable for the drugs you are taking. Pill crushers look like small jars - put the pills inside and then screw on the top. This crushes the pills inside the container.