

Tips For Reducing Med Refusals Through Relationship Based Care

Tip #1: Manage Your Mindset

Shift from: "I need to get these meds in." To: "I need to help them feel safe enough to take this."

Tip #2: Check the Environment

When overwhelmed → the brain says NO

Remove the distractions or remove the person to a quiet space where they can focus
Ensure good lighting & check glasses and hearing aids are present if the person wears them
*Discomfort can also be a distraction. Create comfort with a warm blanket, familiar object and/or comfortable positioning

Tip #3: Paraverbal & Nonverbal

People living with dementia feel more than they understand.

Check your: Tone of voice - soothing | Facial expression - SMILE | Body language - relaxed
• Energy - slow and calm, not irritated or stressed
Adopt a Therapeutic Persona: BE the calm, gentle, warm presence

Tip #4: Approach Where They Can See You

Approach matters JUST as much if not MORE than what you say.

1. Approach from the front
 2. Pause at their level
 3. Make eye contact
 4. Smile
 5. Use their name to get their attention
 6. Offer your hand
 7. Move in personal space slowly and sit beside them
- *Never push/move a wheelchair without connecting/asking first***

Tip #5: Know the Person

There is no one-size-fits-all approach.

- Tailor approach using familiar phrases, preferred timing, and calm locations
- Use their preferred cup, pill, or beverage and note who they respond best to
- Offer a new reason if they refuse, rather than repeating louder

Tip #6: Verbal and Visual Cues

Simple steps, one at a time

Don't stack instructions.

Try:

- "Pick this up." (wait 5-10 second - silence is okay)
- "Now a sip."
- "Swallow"

SHOW vs TELL:

- Pretend to take a pill
- Demonstrate drinking
- Use hand-over-hand guidance if appropriate

Tip #7: Praise the Person and DOCUMENT what works!

This builds positive association and trust for next time.

- "You did great."
- "Thank you."
- "That helps so much."

When you find a phrase, cues, or an approach that works - SHARE with the care team!