This AARP Home Alone Alliance℠ video shows a family caregiver dealing with a common problem. Her mother-in-law, who has dementia, won’t take her medications. Sometimes this happens every day. Linda, the family caregiver, takes an important first step by getting help. A nurse at a call center tells her about some new ways to get her mother to take the medications.

Here are some key points from their conversation:

**Simplify the routine.** Some medications should be given exactly as prescribed. With others you can be more flexible.

**Give the most important medications first.** Ask your family member’s prescriber which medications are most important and which are less important. Ask if any medications could be stopped.

**Try to give the medications while your family member is calm and doing something relaxing.** Try to avoid activities that seem to annoy or distress your family member. For example, if she gets upset because she doesn't remember the people in a photo album, try looking at a magazine instead. If you can figure out what makes her say “no” to the medications, you can try to avoid those situations.

**As a last resort, put the medication in soft food, such as yogurt or applesauce.** (Reminder: Don’t crush a pill or open a capsule without checking with a pharmacist.) Some family caregivers are uncomfortable with this idea because it seems disrespectful. Others think that the medication is important enough to do this. A pharmacist may be able to give you the medication in liquid form, which may be easier to take.

**Remind the person that the doctor or nurse wants her to take the medication.** This takes the responsibility away from you, the caregiver, and appeals to the person’s desire to please the prescriber or nurse.

**Additional Resources**

Below are a few resources with more information. Remember to talk to the prescriber, nurse, or pharmacist who knows your family member best before making any medication-related changes.


> The Bright Focus Foundation website has an article called “Refusing to Take Medications: Tips for the Alzheimer’s Caregiver” at [https://www.brightfocus.org/alzheimers/article/refusing-take-medications-tips-alzheimers-caregiver](https://www.brightfocus.org/alzheimers/article/refusing-take-medications-tips-alzheimers-caregiver).

Although written for nurses, an article called “Medication Management for People with Dementia” in the *American Journal of Nursing* has information that may help family caregivers. It’s available at [https://journals.lww.com/ajnonline/Fulltext/2017/05001/Medication_Management_for_People_with_Dementia_5.aspx](https://journals.lww.com/ajnonline/Fulltext/2017/05001/Medication_Management_for_People_with_Dementia_5.aspx). This article mentions the AARP Home Alone Alliance videos, including the one on dementia-related resistance to medications.

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