VENICE PLASTIC SURGERY
A.E. HAAS, M.D.
Cosmetic, Reconstructive, Face, Breast, and Hand Surgery

Follow Doctors Orders

Doctors, nurses and their families occasionally become patients. I find this group the most difficult to treat. They are often very busy. They are too busy to take proper care of themselves. They are not the only ones however. Retired people are too busy to care for themselves. I tell them to stay around the house with their leg up. What do they do? They invite their friends over for a bridge party. The house has to be vacuumed, the dessert tray must be filled, dust the tables. Where is the rest and leg elevation part here?

It is said that more than 50 percent of medications are improperly taken. One thing doctors do to increase compliance is to give a once a day medication rather than 2 or 3 times a day medication. This is in itself a problem. An older antibiotic like Keflex® should be given 4 times a day. Another medication that also kills staph is Levoquin®. This needs to be taken only once a day but is much more expensive. The patient may not be willing to buy a weeks worth of this medication. Seven pills could cost as much as $ 80. I often ask the patient if they bought the medication and took it as prescribed. Sometimes they admit that they did not.

I once started to take a daily prophylactic aspirin but could not do it. I know how hard it is to take even a single pill especially if you are not used to taking pills. Then there is the person who is on a handful of medications all day long. Taking these correctly is hard to do.

Following other instructions is equally complicated. How about something simple as caring for a single leg wound. This is what I might tell somebody to do. Stop putting ointment on it. Do not use iodine, rubbing alcohol or peroxide any more. Wash only with soap and water. Use the same soap you use to clean your face. Do not change brands at this time. Scrub but gently. Pat the wound dry. Apply generously the prescription cream. Too much is better than not enough. Use a soup spoon to apply the medication. Cover it with a gauze dressing. When you shower again remove the dressing and old cream. It will look awful. Repeat the cycle. Stay off your feet as much as possible. Elevate your leg. You may be in the kitchen for short time periods and walk to the bathroom and living room. Do not go to the street box to get your mail. Do not walk the dog. No swimming. Keep that leg elevated.

When they come back to the clinic I ask what they did last week. They went to the hairdresser and the supermarket, also the next door neighbor's dance party. The patient states that I did not say they should not be doing these things. I think most patients know exactly what I expect from them. But they refuse to change their lifestyle to better their health, even for a short period of time. I have had golfers cry in my office when I told them they needed to take 2 days off from golf "tournaments".

At the clinic the doctors give their patients specific orders. The nurse repeats them. Sometimes we have to send a nurse to the house to further make sure that the doctor's orders are followed. A lot of our efforts are to be sure the instructions are followed properly. It does make a difference. Listen carefully to your doctor. Have him write it down. Call back if you are not sure.

The above represents the opinion of A. E. Haas, M.D.
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Just call us directly. No referral needed unless required by your insurance company

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