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Benefits of Automatic Pill Dispensers^{4,7,8}

- Takes the stress out of remembering medication doses, including number of tablets
- Alarm reminders for when the next dose is to be taken
- Ensures the correct medication and dose is given at the correct time
- Supports patient's independence and provides relief for caregivers

Whether it is a one or multiple medication regimen, people often forget to take their medications routinely as prescribed. Automatic pill dispensers, including automated dispensing machines and smart pill boxes, provide a solution for managing medications. Automatic pill dispensers function as an upgrade to classic organizers, also known as pill boxes, by staying on time with daily medications without requiring too much thinking. There are several designs and styles with unique features that allow for easy medication organization.⁴

Is an Automatic Pill Dispenser Right for Me?

Whether it be prescription medications or over-the-counter supplements and vitamins, remembering to take medications daily can be difficult. These devices help improve taking medications on time every day and may offer additional advantages over traditional weekly organizers by:

- Securely locking medications and only dispensing the correct medication(s) on a pre-determined date and time^{1-3,5-6, 9-10}
- Reminding when to take medications with a built-in alarm^{1-3,5-6, 9-10}

Depending on which automatic dispenser you use, some do not require time consuming pill sorting.⁷ Additionally, some devices can be portable while others are left at home due to their size.

Key Features of Automated Dispensing Machines

These machines are designed to release the right medication at the right time, avoiding the possibility of taking the wrong medication, or number of pills at the wrong time.

The following are features of some automated dispensing machines:

Programmable alarms – Different machines have different ways for providing the user with reminders and notifications. Additionally, some machines have speaker alerts for missed doses or dosing errors.⁷

Record of missed or late doses – Some machines track when medications are forgotten, which is important information for your provider to know. Some machines also share this information directly to caregivers and family members.^{7,8}

Can hold and organize multiple pills at one time – Depending on preference, some machines remove the need for sorting pills into individual pockets every week. These machines allow all the pills of one type of medication to be poured into one pocket, then all the pills of the second medication into another pocket, and so on. Other devices, such as smart pill boxes, still require medications to be loaded into individual daily pockets. These devices dispense one compartment at a time to help prevent accidental overdoses. Several machines allow for “on demand” dosing with certain limitations (how frequently and how many per day) for “as needed” medications. Each product has room for a fixed number of sections, which will determine how many different medications can be stored.^{4,7}

Smartphone compatibility – Some machines have a smartphone application available to assist with the set-up of medication(s), number of pills needed to be dispensed, and scheduled time to take the medication.^{4,7}

What are the benefits of Automatic Pill Dispensers?^{4,7,8}

- Takes the stress out of remembering medication doses, including number of tablets
- Alarm reminders for when the next dose is to be taken
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Examples of Automatic Pill Dispensers

The table below lists a handful of automatic pill dispensers but does not include every machine that is available for purchase online.

Product Name	Capacity	Smartphone Compatibility	Subscription Required	Unique Features
Group Medical Supply (GMS) Medication Dispenser ²	28 pockets 18 pills/pocket	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simple medication regimens • Cheaper, but has less features • Like the conventional pill box but with technologic advances for dose reminders • Portable • Battery powered
Hero ³	10 pockets 90 pills/pocket	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extra “did you take the medication” check-in • Allows for doses to be dispensed early if needed • Requires access to WiFi • Medicare eligible
Livi ⁵	15 pockets 160 pills/pocket	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handles larger sized pills • Can dispense up to 14-days of pills into travel packs
MedaCube ^{TM 6}	8 pockets 160 pills/pocket	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to record messages in an actual voice • Secure cloud storage of information • Allows for doses to be dispensed early if needed
Pria ¹	28 pockets 10 pills/pocket	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extra “did you take the medication” check-in • Facial recognition and PIN code verification • Voice activated feature for reminders
Med-E-Lert ^{TM 9}	28 pockets 9 pills/pocket	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Like the conventional pill box but with technologic advances for dose reminders • Portable • Key to physically lock the device
MOBI ^{® 10}	28 pockets 35 small pills/pocket	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Like the conventional pill box but with technologic advances for dose reminders pockets • Portable • Key to physically lock the device • Optional mobile app

Cost

These machines differ in cost and may not be covered by commercial insurance or Medicare. Medicaid may pay for the cost in some states. Pricing will depend on the company selling the machine.

Summary

Automated pill dispensers can simplify the task of taking medications as prescribed. Individuals who may benefit from using an automatic pill dispenser are those who take medications regularly, have complex medication regimens, or have trouble remembering to take medications. There are several machines available with varying prices and unique features that can fit an individual's needs.



Go online to find more information and to view the references for this toolkit.

aapp.org/556051

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