



Consumers Can Help Prevent Harmful Medication Incidents

SafeMedicationUse.ca Newsletter

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Do You Know Your Medication Allergies?

Medications can sometimes cause an allergic reaction. You might get hives, a rash, or some swelling, or you might have trouble breathing. The reaction can be different from one person to another. A medication allergy isn't the same as a medication side effect, and some allergic reactions can be very serious. Your doctor and pharmacist can help you to figure out if you are allergic to a medication.

ISMP Canada received a report about a consumer who had an allergic reaction that could have been prevented. The doctor asked the consumer if he had any medication allergies. The consumer said that he was allergic to a medication that started with the letter C. Because many medication names start with the letter C, nothing was written down. The consumer was later given an antibiotic, called cephalexin, to treat an infection. This happened to be the medication to which the consumer was allergic. He then experienced another allergic reaction, but was treated and recovered.

SafeMedicationUse.ca has the following advice to help consumers prevent a known allergic reaction from happening again:

- If you experience an allergic reaction, be sure to write down the name of the medication and what happened to you (e.g., hives, trouble breathing) when you took the medication. Keep this record with you at all times.
- Let all your healthcare providers know if you have any allergies to medications. This is very important when a new medication is being started, because it may be similar to the medication that you are allergic to.
- If you have a serious allergy, always wear a medical alert bracelet or necklace explaining your allergy. Ask your healthcare provider if you should also carry an epinephrine auto-injector.



For additional information on how to prevent receiving a medication to which you are allergic, read [Know What to Do if You Are Allergic to a Medicine!](https://safemedicationuse.ca/newsletter/newsletter_medicine_allergy.html) (https://safemedicationuse.ca/newsletter/newsletter_medicine_allergy.html)

Medication safety bulletins contribute to Global Patient Safety Alerts.

This newsletter was developed in collaboration with Best Medicines Coalition and Patients for Patient Safety Canada. Recommendations are shared with healthcare providers, through the ISMP Canada Safety Bulletin, so that changes can be made together. This newsletter shares information about safe medication practices, is noncommercial, and is therefore exempt from Canadian anti-spam legislation.