



Consumers Can Help Prevent Harmful Medication Incidents

## SafeMedicationUse.ca Newsletter

Volume 8 • Issue 8 • September 20, 2017

### Talking to Your Pharmacist May Prevent Harm

When you pick up a new medication from the pharmacy, you should try to talk to the pharmacist about it. You may be tempted to skip this step if you're in a hurry, but try to plan for it. Most pharmacies give printed information to patients when they pick up new medications, but talking with a pharmacist is even better. The pharmacist will explain or show you how to use the medication. The pharmacist will also tell you about possible side effects to watch for and what to do about them. This is also a chance to ask any questions you have about the medication. It may also help you or the pharmacist to catch any mistakes that may have been made with your prescription.

SafeMedicationUse.ca received a report from a consumer that highlights how talking to the pharmacist could prevent harm from a medication mistake. A consumer saw his doctor for a skin condition and was given a prescription for a corticosteroid *cream*. However, when he returned to the pharmacy to pick up the prescription, the pharmacist began to explain how to take corticosteroid *tablets*. Because the consumer had not expected to receive tablets, he questioned the instructions. The pharmacist then realized that a mistake had been made when reading the prescription, and took steps to correct it.

#### SafeMedicationUse.ca has the following tips about talking to your pharmacist to prevent harm:

- When picking up a new medication from the pharmacy, set aside time to talk to the pharmacist about your prescription. If you are not offered counselling, ask to speak with the pharmacist.
- If you don't have time to talk to the pharmacist when picking up your new medication, call the pharmacy later, or arrange a time for the pharmacist to call you.
- After talking to the pharmacist, you should feel that you understand how to take your medication, what side effects to watch for, and what to do about them.
- If you are picking up a refill and cannot remember information about your medication, ask the pharmacist to go over it with you again.
- Take the opportunity to use the [5 Questions](#) to start a conversation with your pharmacist.



#### 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.