



Consumers Can Help Prevent Harmful Medication Incidents

SafeMedicationUse.ca Newsletter

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Do NOT Delay Starting Certain Medications

Some medications, such as blood thinners, should be started right away. In certain cases, a delayed start could cause harm. It is important for consumers to know which medications should be started right away.

SafeMedicationUse.ca received a report of a consumer who left the hospital with a prescription for a blood thinner. However, because his pharmacy was unable to fill the prescription for a few days, he could not start the medication right away. While waiting for the prescription to be filled, the consumer's leg became swollen. This swelling might have been related to the delay in starting the medication. Fortunately, the consumer did not suffer any harm.

Delaying this type of medication could lead to blood clots, which can go to the lungs (causing chest pain and trouble breathing), the heart (causing a heart attack), or the brain (causing a stroke).

SafeMedicationUse.ca has the following suggestions to help consumers start their medications without delay:

- When you get a prescription from your doctor, ask when the medication needs to be started.
- Take your prescription to the pharmacy as soon as possible.
- Ask your pharmacist if you could be harmed by not starting the medication right away. If a pharmacy cannot give you an urgent medication soon enough (because of low stock or technical issues, for example), you should expect the pharmacy to help you get the medication right away. This can be done by borrowing from, or sending you to, another pharmacy that stocks the medication.



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.