

## Help Prevent Medication Incidents

A component of the Canadian Medication Incident Reporting and Prevention System (CMIRPS).

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### Alert

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## Don't Take Your Medicines Twice!

Have you ever ruined a batch of cookies because you accidentally added the baking powder twice? Or spoiled the taste of your dinner because you accidentally added salt twice? Well, the same type of mistake can happen with your medicine!

SafeMedicationUse.ca has received a report about a consumer accidentally taking too much lorazepam. Lorazepam is a drug that is sometimes used to treat anxiety. The consumer took one dose of lorazepam according to the doctor's instructions but then forgot about taking it. Later the same day, the consumer took a second dose of lorazepam before attending an after-wedding party. At the party, family and friends noticed that the person was acting strangely. The next day, the consumer did not remember seeing the wedding gifts, or even being at the party! Fortunately, this person did not suffer any lasting harm, but this type of mistake can have serious consequences. Depending on the particular drug, even one extra dose may cause harm.

You might think that a mistake like this will happen only to someone who is elderly or confused. In fact, forgetting that you have already taken your medicine, or forgetting what time it was when you took your last dose, is something that can happen to anyone.

There are many tools you can use to remind you to take your medicine. Some of these tools also help you to remember whether you've already taken a dose.

- Set an alarm to remind you when your next dose of medicine is due. It is best to use an alarm that you carry with you, such as an alarm on your cellular phone or watch. Make a point of taking your medicine as soon as you hear the alarm.
- Use a calendar to help you keep track of your medicines. Your pharmacist may be able to give you a calendar that lists all your medicines and the times they should be taken. As soon as you have taken a dose of any medicine, check it off on the calendar.
- Use a pill organizer (also called a dosette) to sort your medicines by days of the week and times of the day. Pill organizers are available from most pharmacies. Being able to see your medicines in an organizer can make it easier to know whether or not you've taken a dose.
- Some tablets and capsules are available in blister packs. Some of these blister packs are designed to help you keep track of the doses you have taken. If you're taking many different medicines and you're having trouble keeping track, consider asking your pharmacist whether it is possible to have your medicines specially prepared in blister packs.
- If you are worried about your ability to keep track of your medicines, talk to your doctor or health care practitioner.