



Consumers Can Help Prevent Harmful Medication Incidents

## SafeMedicationUse.ca Newsletter

Volume 7 • Issue 10 • December 8, 2016

### Know Your Medications before Leaving on a “Pass”!

A hospital or a long-term care home may allow a “pass” or leave of absence. Passes allow patients or residents to go to appointments or to spend time with family and friends. Before you leave on a pass, it is important to learn about your medications, and how to take them properly.

SafeMedicationUse.ca received a report from the daughter of a resident at an assisted living home. Before leaving on a pass, the nurse told the daughter that one of the inhalers was to be taken 4 times a day. From experience, the daughter knew that this inhaler was to be taken 2 times a day. The nurse then checked and confirmed that the daughter was right. This report highlights the importance of knowing your medications before leaving on a pass. Using a medication the wrong way can cause serious harm.

**SafeMedicationUse.ca has the following recommendations for consumers and caregivers. These will help with the safe use of medications while out on a pass.**

Before leaving the hospital or home on a pass:

- Ask for an up-to-date list of your medications. Find out if there have been any changes. The list should include the name of each medication, its dose, and instructions for use.
- Make sure you have enough medication to last for as long as you plan to be away.
- Check that all medications are labelled with instructions that you can read and understand.
- Ask to be shown how to properly take and safely store your medications.
- Ask what side effects to watch for, and when to contact the doctor.
- Find out if you have to make a note of the medications you take while on a pass.

If you are unsure about anything related to one of your medications, do not use it before checking with your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist.

Read the [5 Questions to Ask about Your Medications](#) tool created by ISMP Canada and Patients for Patient Safety Canada when talking to your healthcare provider.



**5 QUESTIONS TO ASK ABOUT YOUR MEDICATIONS**  
when you see your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist.

- 1. CHANGES?**  
Have any medications been added, stopped or changed, and why?
- 2. CONTINUE?**  
What medications do I need to keep taking, and why?
- 3. PROPER USE?**  
How do I take my medications, and for how long?
- 4. MONITOR?**  
How will I know if my medication is working, and what side effects do I watch for?
- 5. FOLLOW-UP?**  
Do I need any tests and when do I book my next visit?

**Remember to include:**

- ✓ drug allergies
- ✓ vitamins and minerals
- ✓ herbal/natural products
- ✓ all medications including non-prescription products

**Ask your doctor, nurse or pharmacist to review all your medications to see if any can be stopped or reduced.**

Visit [safemedicationuse.ca](http://safemedicationuse.ca) for more information.

### 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.