

Consumers Can Help Prevent Harmful Medication Incidents

SafeMedicationUse.ca Newsletter

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Who Keeps the Box? Are Your Prescriptions Properly Labelled?

The pharmacy label on your medication has important information. It identifies you as the person who will be taking the medication and tells you how to use your medication properly and safely. Adding a label to medications such as creams, liquids, and inhalers can be difficult. In these cases, the label is sometimes placed on the outer box or package that contains the medication.

SafeMedicationUse.ca received several reports describing prescription labels placed only on the outer box, without a label on the actual product or medication. In one case, a consumer reported getting a liquid antibiotic in a bottle with no pharmacy label. The label had been placed on the outer box, but the box had been discarded in the pharmacy, before the medication was given to the consumer.



In other cases, the box is given to the consumer, but it is thrown away when the consumer gets home. As a result, the consumer does not have important information about how to use the medication.

SafeMedicationUse.ca has the following suggestions for consumers to make sure their medications are always properly labelled:

- When you are picking up your prescriptions at the pharmacy, take the time to check that each prescription has a pharmacy label on the product, not just on the outer box. This is especially important for products such as creams, liquids, and inhalers.
- If you don't find a pharmacy label on your medication container when you get home from the pharmacy, look for a label on the outer box. Keep the box or take a picture of the pharmacy label on the outside of the box. This way you will always have a record of the instructions.
- If you find a medication with no label or a label that is not readable, contact your pharmacy for instructions. The pharmacy will always have a record of your doctor's instructions.

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.