

What you can do to ensure your own medication safety

Medications can greatly improve your quality of life. However, if taken the wrong way, they can put your health at risk. The following are tips on how to prevent medication errors, and improve your health care.

1. Use a Personal Medication Card:

- Interior Health provides medication cards free of charge. To print cards from home go to <https://www.interiorhealth.ca/YourHealth/MedicationsAndYou/Pages/KeepTrackofMedications.aspx>
- Keep the card with you at all times; it will conveniently fit in your wallet.

What is included on this card?

Medication List:

- It is important to fill out the medication list provided on these cards with:
 - The **name** of each medication
 - The **strength** of each medication
 - The **dose** you take and **when** you take each medication
 - The **purpose** of each medication
- Include on your medication list any prescription medications, nutritional supplements, vitamins, herbal remedies, over-the-counter or non-prescription drugs, and any samples provided to you by your physician.
- Anytime your medications **change, update** your medication list (or have your healthcare provider update it for you).
- **Review** your wallet card with your health care providers at every visit. One provider may not know about medications that others have prescribed for you.

Personal Information:

- Name, address, home phone number, cell number, date of birth
- Emergency contact name and number
- Date of last vaccinations
- Medical conditions
- Allergies

Provider Information:

- Pharmacy and phone number
- Family doctor and phone number

Why should I use this card?

- **Safety:**
 - Good prescribing requires a good medication record.
 - **Medication duplication:** Your medication record helps your health care professional make sure that you are not taking two forms of the same medicine. If your medication changes, it will also allow the health care professional to make sure you are not taking both the old and new medications by mistake.
 - **Allergies:** By listing any allergies that you may have to drugs, the health care professional can make sure that you do not accidentally receive a drug that might harm you instead of help you.
 - **Herbal supplements, over-the-counter medications, vitamins, and dietary supplements** can cause problems as well. They can have interactions with your prescriptions.
- **Accuracy and Completeness**
 - An up-to-date record will provide the most accurate medication information to different health care providers who may not know what other healthcare providers have recommended or prescribed.

- **Access**
 - In an **emergency**, this card can provide medical staff with your vital information quickly and effectively. This ensures your safety and allows proper care to be given.
 - Medication names are hard to remember; in an emergency you may forget what you were taking.
- 2. Organize your medications:**
- If you are having problems remembering when to take your medications, **talk to your pharmacist**. They can help you create a list of medications, choose a pill organizer that will suit your needs, or blister-pack your medications for you.
- 3. Create safe medication habits:**
- Try to stick with **one pharmacy**, this allows your pharmacist to easily keep track of your current medications and get to know your personal preferences.
 - **Do not share** your medications with friends or family members
 - **Follow all directions** and warnings on the label
 - **Return** all expired or **unused medications** to your community pharmacy so they can dispose of them safely.
 - Store all medications in their **original containers out of the reach of children and pets**
 - **Do not mix** different pills in one bottle
 - Call your pharmacist or doctor if you experience any unusual **side effects**.
 - **Double-check** the imprints on tablets and capsules after getting refills
 - Consult your doctor or pharmacist **BEFORE** purchasing over the counter medications, nutritional or herbal products as some have the potential to cause **dangerous interactions** with current medications.
- 4. Going to the hospital?**
- Take your **Personal Medication Card** and your current medications with you, including over-the-counter medications, vitamins and herbal products. A health care provider may need to see them, or you may need to continue using them. Ask whether or not you should send your medications home with family members.
 - **Ask** what medications are being given to you and what they are for. Asking questions may prevent errors.
 - **Look** at the medications you are taking before you take them. If they look different, ask why. You may be receiving a generic brand, or it may be an error.
 - Do not let anyone give you medications without first having them **check your hospital ID bracelet**. This helps prevent the administration of someone else's medications.
- 5. Leaving hospital?**
- **Ask** which medications you should continue taking
 - **Update** your current medication list if any prescriptions change or if new medications are added or have a health care professional assist you.
 - **Inform** your community pharmacist and family doctor about any changes that occurred in the hospital

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