



MEDICATION ERRORS

HOW CAN I HELP PREVENT MEDICATION ERRORS?

Become part of the checks and balances process

Newspapers and TV tell stories about patients being given the wrong drugs in the hospital, sometimes with tragic results. So it is no surprise that most people worry about medication errors.

Studies show that errors are usually the result of imperfect systems, not careless nurses and doctors. For example, nurses are often interrupted when preparing and giving medication.

But you can help prevent an error. Research shows that people who are informed, ask questions, and ask for another opinion when things don't seem right are less likely to experience a medication error. So be actively engaged in your care!



EVIDENCE

There are 400,000 *preventable* medication errors in hospitals every year. ***But research suggests that a strong relationship between you and your care team can help prevent these errors.*** For a list of things you can do to help prevent medication, see the checklist below.

One strategy hospitals use to prevent medication errors is called ***medication reconciliation***, and it starts when you are admitted to the hospital. Medication reconciliation is a safety check of all your medications. You bring a list of the medications, over-the-counter drugs, vitamins, and herbs you take at home, and your list is compared with the medications ordered by the doctor in the hospital. This prevents your getting the wrong dose or medication. Herbs

and vitamins can cause some medications to be more or less effective, so know what you are taking at home.

Medication errors often happen when patients are moved from one care unit to another — for example, moving from critical care to the medical unit. These errors can include mistakes in the timing, dose, frequency, or type of medication.

If you can't be part of the medication reconciliation process because you're sick, can't communicate, or aren't thinking clearly, ask a friend or family member to be involved.

Medication reconciliation may happen in a one way on the medical surgical unit and another way in the coronary care unit of the same hospital

YOU CAN HELP PREVENT MEDICATION ERRORS BY BRINGING A LIST OF THE MEDICINES YOU TAKE AT HOME.

What is important is that your medication list and the hospital medication list are cross checked.

Nurses play a key role in medication safety. They are responsible for giving you your medication and monitoring your response. In fact, one study showed that nurses prevented 86 percent of medication errors made by doctors and pharmacists.

Nurses have a long history of using the “5 Rights” for medication safety. They make sure that:

1. The right drug is ordered (and for the right reason)
2. The right dose and preparation (amount of medication in the right form) is used
3. The right patient gets the medication
4. The medication is given at the right time
5. The right route (IV, oral, injection, or topical) is used

But this strategy **alone** is not enough to prevent mistakes in the complex hospital environment of today. That’s why it’s so important that you be actively involved in your care and take part in the 5 Rights cross check by using the checklist below.

MY 5 RIGHTS CROSS CHECK	YES	NO
Is this the Right medication for me? And the Right reason?		
Is this the Right dose and preparation?		
Am I the Right patient?		
Is this the Right time?		
Is this the Right route?		

Patients ***can and should actively partner with their care team to prevent medication errors.***

Sometimes, patients are afraid to ask questions, even when they notice that the medication they have been given does not look right. There are, sadly, many examples where patients have been right but have not spoken up.



TIPS FROM A NURSE

PREPARE A COMPLETE LIST OF YOUR MEDICATIONS BEFORE GOING TO THE HOSPITAL.

There are many simple forms online that can help you prepare your medication list. One is available from the professional organization of hospital pharmacists at www.safemedication.com.

IN THE HOSPITAL

Ask your nurse to:

- ▶ Give you a list of your medications
- ▶ Discuss the purpose of the medications and what you should expect
- ▶ Discuss how he or she will monitor your response to the medications

Ask your doctor to:

- ▶ Explain why the medication was ordered and what it will do
- ▶ Make sure that your medication list from home has been *reconciled* with the orders for your medications while in the hospital

Ask to speak to one of the hospital pharmacists if you are still unclear about your medications.

If you are a family member or advocate for a patient who cannot provide and receive important information, then you should be involved in decisions about medications. You should also be there when the medication is given.

THINGS I CAN DO TO PREVENT MEDICATION MISTAKE	YES	NO
Asked for the names of the medications you are being given		
Do NOT take a medication without being told why it is needed for your care		
Have a friend or family member with you when you are being given medication if you cannot monitor the process yourself because you're sick, can't communicate, or aren't thinking clearly		
Ask what medications you should and should not take before your operation		
Before you leave the hospital, ask for a list of medications you should be taking at home		

Source: Institute of Medicine Report

REMINDER...ARE THESE 5 RIGHT?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Patient	<input type="checkbox"/>
Medication	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dose & Preparation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Time	<input type="checkbox"/>
Route	<input type="checkbox"/>



YOUR NOTES
