

Being Safe with Medicines

Auckland City Hospital is committed to promoting the safe use of medicines and actively tries to prevent medication errors from happening.



Unfortunately, errors with medicines do happen. They can happen in hospitals, at the GP clinic, at the Pharmacy and even in your own home. Sometimes these errors can cause harm.

It is important for you to know about the medicines you are taking. This means that you also can help prevent errors happening with medicines. Your doctor, nurse or pharmacist will be able to answer any questions you may have about your medicines.



What can you do?

1. **Tell the doctor, nurse or pharmacist about every medicine you are taking.** This includes any vitamins, minerals, herbal or homeopathic remedies, traditional medicines you receive with or without a prescription. This is important as it assists in you getting quality and appropriate care.
2. **Tell the doctor, nurse or pharmacist about any allergies** you may have and how you react to medicines. This can help you avoid getting a medicine that could cause harm.
3. **Know your current body weight.** The dose of some medicines is based on your weight.
4. **Never take your own medicines while you are in hospital unless you have been told to by the doctor or pharmacist.** All medicines must be checked to ensure that they can all go together without causing any problems for you. The hospital will supply the medicines where possible. Your own medicines will be locked safely away until it is time for you to go home.
5. **Always ask when a medicine is being given to you, whether it is for you and what it is for.** This is to ensure that you get the right medicine. Your identity must be checked every time a medicine is given to you.
6. **When you receive a prescription, make sure you can read it and know what is on it.** If you can not read the doctors handwriting, your pharmacist might not be able to either.

7. **Ask for information about your medicines from your doctor, nurse or pharmacist.** Some questions to ask:

- What is the name of the medicine?
- What is the medicine for?
- Is this dose of medicine appropriate?
- How often do I take it?
- For how long will I need to take it?
- What side effects might I get? What do I do if I get these?
- Is this medicine safe to take with my other medicines or supplements?
- What food, drink, and activities should I not take while taking this medicine?
- How should I store this medicine?
- When should I see an improvement in my symptoms or condition?

Knowing this information means you will be better prepared if something unexpected happens to you. That way, you can report any problems right away and get help before it gets worse.

8. **Medicines labels can be hard to understand.** If you have any questions about the directions on your medicine labels, always ask your doctor or pharmacist before you take the medicine home. For example, ask if taking four doses daily means taking a dose every 6 hours around the clock or just during the time you are awake.
9. **If the medicine's instructions are not the same as** what you were taking before and you do not know why, check with your doctor or pharmacist to see why there has been a change.

Continued over page

10. Ask your pharmacist for the best way to measure your liquid medicine. A household teaspoon does not often hold the correct measure and may result in under or over treatment. A medicine measuring spoon or cup is available to help measure the right dose. Ask your pharmacist if you need a measuring device.
11. Store any medicines in a safe and secure place out of reach of children. Ideally in a locked cupboard or for medicines requiring refrigeration on the top shelf of the fridge at the back.
12. Some medicines are supplied with childproof lids. However if you would like to have one for a medicine that doesn't have one, you can buy one from your local Pharmacy.

- *Be actively involved in your health care.*
- *Get information that you can understand.*
- *Speak up if you have any questions or concerns.*

Your doctors, nurses and pharmacists work hard to ensure that the care they deliver is the very best for you but you can also help us to help you by following these tips.

Patient Information

Medication Safety

Help us to help you

12 tips for patient to help prevent errors occurring with medicines



If you would like more information about Medication Safety within Auckland District Health Board, contact

Nirasha Parsotam
Principal Pharmacist – Medication Safety
nirashap@adhb.govt.nz
09 3074949 extn 6183

