

Medication Safety at University Health Network



Information for patients and families

Read this booklet to learn:

- how UHN supports medication safety
- what you can do to help
- who to talk to if you have any questions



How does the University Health Network support medication safety?

At the University Health Network (UHN), patient safety is most important to us. We have a plan that we follow to support medication safety and your care.

1. When you come to the hospital or clinic we will talk with you about all of the medications you are taking. This helps us know what medications you are using now, and what you have used in the past. We will also ask you if you use substances such as nicotine products and cannabis.
2. We ask you to bring all of your medications and a list of them to the hospital every time you visit. This helps us give you new medications that are safe to take with others you are taking.
3. Before we give you any medications, our pharmacists and nurses make sure you:
 - **have the right kind of medication**
 - **have the right amount**
 - **take it at the right times**
 - **use it the right way**
4. We use research to guide us when we choose and order medications to provide you the most benefit and the least risk of harm.
5. We tell you if a medication mistake happens during your treatment.
6. We always look at new ways to make our plan for medication safety even better.
7. We ask you for your help with our medication safety plan.

What can I do to help?

We want you and your family to be part of the health care team. Here are some tips for what you can do to help us.

When you come to the hospital:

- **Bring all your medications (in the bottles they came in) and a list of the medications you take each time you visit the hospital.**

We need to know what you are taking, including:

- prescription medications
- over-the-counter medications (not prescription)
- herbal (pills, liquid or powders made from plants or herbs)
- vitamins
- Proof of Medical Authorization for cannabis products and product in original packaging
- recent vaccinations (for example, the flu shot)

Once we have checked your medications, we will give them back to you so your family can take them home. While you are in the hospital, do NOT take your usual medications (the medications you were taking at home) unless your doctor or pharmacist tells you it's OK. There may be risks to taking them that need to be reviewed by your health care team.

- **Tell your doctor, nurse or pharmacist if you are allergic to any medications.** This will help us make sure we provide you with the medication that is most appropriate for you.

While you are at the hospital or visiting one of the clinics

A pharmacist or other health professional may meet with you during your hospital stay. They will talk to you about your home medications. This will help us make sure we have a correct list of what you were taking at home.

Your doctor, pharmacist or nurse will give you all of this information about your medications:

- what the medication is called
- what the medication is for
- how and when to take each medication, and for how long
- what side effects to watch for
- what to do if you get side effects
- whether the new medication replaces other medications you were using at home. If it does, they will tell you why they made the change
- what food, drink or activities you should avoid when using the medication

Please ask us if you:

- don't receive this information
- think you are missing a medication
- are not sure why a new medication has been started

If you have any worries about using a medication, you have the right to ask questions about your medications and to refuse to take it.

When you pick up your medications from the pharmacy after discharge from the hospital:

- **Make sure you understand what is written on the label.**

Some instructions are hard to understand. For example, ask your pharmacist if “4 doses daily” means you should take a dose every 6 hours during the day and night or just 4 times during the day.

- **Ask your pharmacist about how you should measure your medication.**

For example, some liquid medication instructions ask you to take 1 teaspoon, which is 5 millilitres. This is not the same as using a regular teaspoon you have in your house. Ask your pharmacist for an accurate measuring spoon.

When you are home:

- **Read the label every time you take your medication.**

This will make sure that you are using:

- the right medication
- in the right amount
- in the right way
- at the right time

- **Safely store and dispose of your medication.**

Medication that is not stored or disposed of safely could be stolen or taken by mistake.

Safe storage

- If your medication doesn't need to be stored in the fridge, lock it in a drawer or cabinet in a dark, cool and dry place.
- Do not share your medication. Medication prescribed to you can be dangerous to others.

Safe disposal

It is dangerous to keep unused or expired medication that you no longer need.

- Take unused or expired medicine to a pharmacy for safe disposal.
- Do not flush medication down the toilet.
- Do not throw medication in the garbage.

Ask your pharmacist if you have any questions about medication storage or disposal.

Who can I call if I have any questions?

If you have any questions about your medications, speak to your doctor, pharmacist or nurse. They will be happy to answer your questions.



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