

Talk with Your Pharmacist: The Key to Safe Medication Use

Each time you have a prescription filled is a chance for you to learn about your medication and how to use it safely. This process is called medication counselling. Medication counselling, from your prescriber or your pharmacist, helps you learn why you need your medication, how to take it, common side effects that may happen, and serious side effects that you need to watch for. It is also a way to check if there are changes since your last prescription was filled. Most importantly, it can help prevent errors.

ISMP Canada received a report about an error that was found during medication counselling. While the pharmacist was explaining a new prescription, the patient's caregiver noticed that the dispensed dose of the medication was 10 times more than the prescribed dose. Because of medication counselling, the error was caught before the patient took any of the medication.

Follow these tips to help make sure you benefit from medication counselling.

If you are receiving a new medication:

- Check that the medication matches what you expect, especially if it is a new medication.
- Ask your pharmacy to have the pharmacist call you for medication counselling if someone else will be picking up your medication, if the medication is being delivered, or if you are unable to wait for the pharmacist at pick-up.
- If you forget to ask something or the information isn't clear, contact your pharmacist.

If you are refilling a medication:

- Check that the medication looks the same as before.
- Ask whether anything about the prescription has changed, such as dose or instructions.
- Tell your pharmacy team if there have been any recent changes to your health, to ensure your pharmacy profile is up to date.



**Taking a few moments to review
your medications and ask questions
helps you to stay informed and helps
prevent medication errors.**

Mederror newsletters are reviewed by consumers who are committed to improving medication safety. Learning from consumer reports is shared with health care providers through [ISMP Canada](#) publications. This newsletter shares information about safety medication practices, is noncommercial, and is therefore exempt from Canadian anti-spam legislation. *Funding support provided by Health Canada. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the views of Health Canada. Mederror is a component of the [Canadian Medication Incident Reporting and Learning Prevention System \(CMIRPS\)](#).