



Safe Medication Management

Safe and accurate medication management is an important component of caregiving and supervision. Hurried or lax medication practices can lead to medication errors which can result in serious harm or require medical intervention.

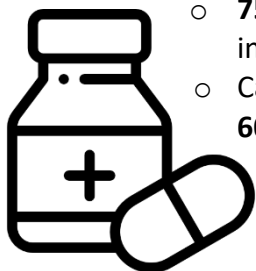
Seven “Rights” to Safe Medication Administration

Safe medication administration involves giving the (1) right medicine to the (2) right individual at the (3) right time in the (4) right amount (dose) using the (5) right route (a pill or a shot or an IV). For some medication, safe medication administration may involve *first* checking on a health condition, like the individual’s glucose level or blood pressure [the (6) right reason]. In some situations, it also means making the (7) right communication or documentation that a medication has been given (or not) so others can stay informed. This includes making sure prescriptions are renewed and refilled timely.

Source: [DDS](#)

Current DDS Statistics

- Medication errors are the **second most frequent** special incident reported to DDS.
 - 75% of reported medication errors involve a missed dose.
 - Care staff are responsible for over **60%** of the reported medication errors.
 - 1 in 8** medication errors required enhanced monitoring or medical intervention.
- There were **3,079** reported medication errors in 2021 involving **2,370** individuals.



Source: *DDS FY 2019/20 Medication Error SIRs Qualitative Study*

Individuals at a Higher Risk of Medication Administration Errors

- Prescribed multiple medications.
- With complex medication administration schedules.
- With multiple conditions requiring medication.
- Medications that look or sound the same.
- Medications that may react with certain foods, drinks, or other medications.
- Multiple caretakers who dispense medication.
- Recent change in residence, health care provider, or care staff.



Source: *DDS FY 2019/20*

Medication Error SIRs Qualitative Study, [Mayo Clinic](#)



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Best Practices

Before Administration



- At the start of each shift, review the list of medication prescribed for an individual to see what is due. In some facilities, this is listed on the individual's medication administration record (MAR).
 - Remember, medication orders change. Do not rely on your memory for what medication is due.
- Dispense medications in a quiet area with as few distractions as possible.
- If dispensing medication out of bubble packs, make sure all the pills in the bubble pack have been dispensed and the bubble pack is empty before it is discarded.

During Administration



- Before giving an individual their medication, look carefully at the medication packaging to verify that the medication you are giving is the right medication at the right dose and is due to be administered at that time. Remember the 7 "rights"!
- If you are unfamiliar with the individuals that you are giving medication to, use two identifiers to verify you are giving the medication to the right person.
 - Ask the individual to tell you their full name,
 - Ask another staff to confirm the individual, or
 - Use a form of identification that has a recent photograph of the individual.
- Use name alerts to prevent a mix up between individuals with the same or similar-sounding names.

After Administration



- If you drop a medication on the floor, throw it away and dispense a new one.
 - Follow your agency's procedures for documenting the wasted medication, including how to account for the replacement medication given.
- When individuals move between service sites or to different caregivers, confirm with the other care staff what medications have been given by them and which are due for you to administer.
 - Tell the oncoming staff about any medications you did and did not give.
- Conduct daily reviews of an individual's medication administration record to make sure all medicine was properly given each day.

Additional Considerations



- Avoid workarounds or deviations from medication administration procedures.
- At regular intervals (such as the 1st of the month), check if an individual's medication supply is running low and proactively order refills.
- Consider using available technology to help with administration of medications. These can include reminders on mobile devices, mobile applications for timely administration or reordering, bar-code scanning, or computerized physician orders.

Source: [DDS, Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality](#)



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What to Do if You Make an Error?

- Put the safety of the individual first.
 - Immediately inform the doctor and/or pharmacy about the error and ask about any immediate corrective action required to prevent harm.
 - If any, follow the doctor's instructions about corrective action to address any possible repercussions from the medication error.
- Watch the individual for a period of time following the medication error for any signs of difficulty.
 - Call the doctor or 911 if the individual appears to be in distress.
- Follow your agency's protocol for what to do when there is a medication error. This may include how to document the error and who you are required to contact (RN, family).
- Report the medication error as a special incident to the regional center.
 - If you gave medication to the wrong individual, you also may need to complete a missed dose report for the individual who was supposed to receive the medication.
 - If one medication has been incorrectly given for a number of days, complete one SIR for each time the incorrect medication was given.

Source: DDS Clinical Services

When an Individual is Planning to be Away From Home

- Anticipate medications they will need.
- If on an outing, bring the medication with you and remember to document that it was given when you return home.
- If the individual is having a home visit, talk to the individual and their family about what medications are to be given and when.



- Help the individual and family put together a plan for how to organize the medication and set reminders for taking it on time.

Quality Assurance

- Create a quality assurance process to help identify medication errors and create mitigation strategies to minimize or avoid errors.

Importance of Timely Prescription Refills

- Lack of timely ordering of medications is a consistent problem across all resident types.
- Delays in timely ordering include medication orders reaching refill limits, delays in picking up prescriptions from the pharmacy, and needing lab work before an order can be refilled.



Additional Resources

- [Medication Safety Program | CDC](#)
- [Medication Management | HSAG](#)
- [Medication Management | DDS](#)
- [Seven Rights of Assisting with Self-Administration of Medication | DDS](#)



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