

Before you take it



Know your medicines and keep an up-to-date list

Check that you are using your medicines in the right way

Ask your healthcare professional if you're not sure



Every year in Northern Ireland, it is estimated that there are 11.7 million medication errors. It is thought these medication errors could cause 20 deaths, contribute to 57 inpatient deaths and cost the health service around £1.9 million per year.

Over 500 local community pharmacies across Northern Ireland are supporting a medication safety campaign that promotes the use of a three-step checking system to help increase public awareness and education about the importance of using medicine safely. The 'Know Check Ask' campaign will commence as part of the 'Living Well' service and will run throughout May and June.

Living Well is a community based pharmacy service delivered by the Public Health Agency, Department of Health and Community Pharmacy Northern Ireland. The service supports you in improving your health and wellbeing by:

- raising awareness of various public health messages and campaigns;
- sharing of health and wellbeing information;
- signposting to a relevant health professional, service or support in the community;
- and using behavioural interventions, if appropriate.

Through the Living Well service, pharmacies help you to address risk factors that contribute to disease in Northern Ireland.

All medication errors are potentially avoidable and can be greatly reduced or even prevented. Anyone taking medication should follow the three simple steps below.

- **KNOW** each of the medicines you're taking and how to take them. Ideally keep a 'My Medicines' list so that there's a clear record of the medicines that you take.
- **CHECK** you're using your own medicines in the right way. Always follow the directions on the medicine label and take medicines at the right dose and at the right time of day. Always read the information leaflet and never share your medicines.

- **ASK** your healthcare professional (doctor, pharmacist or nurse) if you're unsure about your medicines. Never stop, reduce or increase your medicines without asking.

The campaign encourages everyone who takes medication regularly to be more involved in decisions about their medication and encourages them to report or discuss issues and concerns about their medication with a healthcare professional.

The public are reminded they should always follow the directions on the medicine label and take medicines at the right dose and at the right time of day. They should never stop, reduce or increase their medicines without asking a healthcare professional and they should never share medicines with others.

Keeping a list of medications, including other medicines or supplements you have bought e.g. vitamins or herbal medicines, helps healthcare professionals and care givers know what medicines you are taking. Bringing an up-to-date list of your medicines to healthcare appointments helps healthcare professionals give you the best advice and helps you get the best out of your medicines.

Some people find it useful to take a photo of their medications list and keep it on their phone or take photographs of their medications with the label in full view. A 'My medicines list' is available at your local pharmacy or to download here:

- [My Medicines list](#)

For further information and advice, call into your local community pharmacy and speak to a member of the pharmacy team or visit [Know Check Ask - HSC \(hscni.net\)](#)

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