



Consumers Can Help Prevent  
Harmful Medication Incidents

## SafeMedicationUse.ca Newsletter

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### Are Your Medications Ready to Use?

Medications do not always come in a form that is ready for you to use or take right away. Sometimes you will have to cut a tablet to get the right dose or mix a medication with water. If you don't receive your medications in a ready-to-use form, there's a chance of a mistake. This newsletter highlights steps to make sure your medications are ready to be used safely.

SafeMedicationUse.ca received reports describing harm that people experienced because the medications they received were not ready to be used. In one report, an adult used a knife to cut their tablets into smaller pieces to get the dose they needed to take. The person ended up with cuts on their hands.



In another report, a parent was given a bottle of antibiotic powder for their child. The powder should have been mixed with water at the pharmacy. Instead, the parent had to mix it at home, using instructions that were meant for the pharmacist. The child received the wrong dose.

#### **SafeMedicationUse.ca shares the following tips to make sure you receive your medications from the pharmacy in a form that is ready to be used:**

- Ask your pharmacist to give your medication in a form that is ready to use.
  - The pharmacy team can cut your tablets into the right dose, if asked.
  - Some medications, such as antibiotics for children, should be mixed at the pharmacy.
- If you prefer to cut tablets yourself, follow these tips:
  - Avoid using sharp objects to split tablets.
  - Buy a pill cutter to split tablets evenly and prevent injuries.

Keep in mind that not all tablets can be cut. Some medications have special coatings and must be swallowed whole. Read some additional tips about splitting tablets here: <https://safemedicationuse.ca/newsletter/downloads/201307NewsletterV4N4NotBeCrushedSplitChewed.pdf>

This newsletter was developed in collaboration with Best Medicines Coalition and Patients for Patient Safety Canada. Recommendations are shared with healthcare providers, through the ISMP Canada Safety Bulletin, so that changes can be made together. This newsletter shares information about safe medication practices, is noncommercial, and is therefore exempt from Canadian anti-spam legislation.

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