



POISON ALERT: Foraging for mushrooms could cost you your liver, or your life

[Home](#) » [Education & News](#) » [News](#) » 2016

Older adults at risk for medication error; tips to prevent unintentional poisoning

There's a lot to say about medication safety for older adults! On Wed. July 6 the Ontario Poison Centre (OPC) hosted a Twitter chat on this important topic. In 2015, OPC received over 8000 calls about individuals over the age of 60; of these calls, over one-third concerned medication errors. With an aging population, the scope of this issue will continue to grow. Many individuals and groups joined in the discussion offering their insights and opinions, including the Alzheimer's Society, the Institute for Safe Medication Practices (ISMP) Canada and the American Association of Poison Control Centres (AAPCC).

Common themes and key learnings emerged throughout the chat.

- There are different factors that influence an older adult's risk for unintentional poisoning depending on their environment (home, hospital, long term care, assisted living, etc.) Generally, older adults self-administering their medication are more likely to suffer unintentional poisoning due to medication error.
- Older adults in particular should regularly review a list of their medications (including prescriptions, over the counter medications, supplements and vitamins) with their doctor or pharmacist. ISMP Canada has developed a list of [5 Questions to ask about your medications](#) which can help to guide these conversations with healthcare providers.
- Tools like medication record cards* and medication record smartphone apps are useful in keeping track of multiple medications. This is important information to have on your person in case of emergency and when going to appointments with different healthcare providers.
- Older adults and/or their caregivers should use daily or weekly pill organizer boxes, blister packs and/or a scheduled list of regular medications to keep track of which medications are taken and at what time. However, it's very important to remember that pill organizers are not child resistant and should be placed in a locked container when children are in the home or visiting. Keeping the original medication packaging is also important so the label can be referred to for information and instructions.
- Doctors and pharmacists should review patient medication lists with a focus on deprescribing when appropriate.
- Regularly cleaning out the medicine cupboard and returning expired medications to the pharmacy helps prevent unintentional poisoning.
- To be prepared for unintentional poisonings, it's a good idea to save the local poison centre phone number as a contact in a smartphone or post it in a prominent place. Ontarians can call 1-800-268-9017 for poison advice 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

View a [summary of the whole chat on Storify](#). If you have thoughts on future ideas for Twitter chats, send us a tweet [@ON_Poison](#) and in the meantime follow us on Twitter for poison information and prevention tips!

*Contact poison.information@sickkids.ca if you are interested in receiving a medication record card.

Get Help Now

[First Aid](#)
[Alerts](#)
[How We Can Help](#)
[Canadian Poison Centres](#)

For Families

[What is a Poison?](#)
[Poison Prevention](#)
[Hidden Hazards](#)
[Hazard Symbols](#)

Common Poisons

[Medicines](#)
[Plants](#)
[Mushrooms](#)
[Snakes](#)
[Fall Hazards](#)
[Current Top 10](#)

Health-care Professionals

[Antidotes](#)
[Privacy](#)

Education & News

[News](#)
[Request Resources](#)
[Poison Links](#)
[Poison Prevention Week](#)
[Toxicology Conference 2017](#)

About Us

[Our Team](#)
[Our Mandate](#)
[Our History](#)
[Contact Us](#)
[Annual Reports](#)
[Media](#)