

Adverse Drug Reactions

What is an adverse drug reaction?

An adverse drug reaction (ADR) is any harmful or unintended reaction experienced by the resident after the administration of a medication (prescription or over-the-counter) or any health product (e.g. vitamins, herbals, vaccines, etc.) under its normal conditions of use. It can be due to taking this medication or health product for the first time, or from an interaction with existing medications.

Symptoms can be internal or external and range from mild to severe. The onset of occurrence can be immediate, within minutes, or delayed up to years after first being exposed to the medication or health product.

When first admitting a resident:

- **ASK** the resident and family members of any previous allergies or ADRs
- **DOCUMENT** the details about the reaction (e.g. timing, suspected medication, actions taken, outcome, etc.) on the Pharmacy Admission Notice, Resident's Record, Medication Administration Record (MAR) and Prescriber Order Sheet. This assists in protecting the resident from future occurrences.

Be on the lookout for symptoms

Any undesirable symptom that is new or unusual for the resident could potentially be an ADR. Some common ADRs include:

- Confusion, delirium, acting spaced out or "not their usual self"
- Crying, depression, social withdrawal
- Falls
- Headache
- Nausea, vomiting, stomach upset
- Shortness of breath, difficulty breathing
- Skin rash, hives, redness, itching

In the event of a suspected ADR:

ASSESS RESIDENT SAFETY

Assess, act immediately, monitor the resident and call 911 if it's a medical emergency

DOCUMENT

Document details about the reaction including timing, suspected medication, actions taken and outcome on the resident's record/progress notes, MAR/eMAR and Prescriber Order Sheets

NOTIFY

Notify the resident, resident's substitute decision-maker, prescriber, attending physician, Director of Care/Medical Director and Pharmacy

COMPLETE

Complete Incident Report Form

REPORT

Initiate Health Canada Vigilance Adverse Reaction Report Form and forward to Pharmacy for submission to Health Canada

Why report?

Reporting adverse drug reactions contributes to improving the safety of medications, and other health products. Reporting to Health Canada is required. Health Canada has a protocol in place for tracking and monitoring ADRs.