

## ISMP Canada Safety Bulletin Supplement

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### Ready-to-Use Medications: Reducing the Need for Patients to Modify

Errors can occur when a medication needs additional preparation before use by a patient or their caregiver; therefore, as much as possible, medications should be given to patients in a ready-to-use format. When a ready-to-use format is not feasible, clear and precise preparation instructions are needed.

#### Incident Examples

Mederror.ca shared 2 reports\* describing a need for patients to take extra steps to prepare the medication before it could be taken/given.

- *In the first case, an older adult needed to split their tablets to obtain the correct dose. They suffered cuts on their hands while trying to split the tablets with a knife.*
- *In the second case, the pharmacy dispensed a bottle of unreconstituted antibiotic powder for pediatric use. The parent was given reconstitution instructions written for and intended for use by pharmacy professionals. The parent attempted to follow these instructions, but an error in the reconstitution process led to the child receiving a dose that was higher than intended.*

**The following tips are shared to reduce the need for patients or caregivers to modify medications before use.**

#### Prescribers

- As much as possible, prescribe medications in commercially available formats and doses.
- If it is known that manipulation will be needed to obtain the prescribed dose, ask the pharmacy to prepare the medications in a ready-to-use format by including a specific request (e.g., split tablets) on the prescription.

#### Pharmacists

- When manipulation is needed, offer to split tablets for patients who may have difficulty doing so. Recommend a pill cutter for those who wish to undertake this process themselves.
- When checking products intended for reconstitution, ensure that the product is ready-to-use before providing it to the patient or caregiver. Write clear and simple instructions for the patient in the rare circumstance that a powder is intended to be reconstituted at a later time.
- During counselling, ask the patient or caregiver if they anticipate encountering difficulty administering the medication as dispensed.



\*Tips for consumers on this topic can be found in this consumer newsletter:

<https://safemedicationuse.ca/newsletter/ready-to-use.html>