

Medication Safety

'Know Check Ask'

Guide for Health and Social Care Staff



Department of
Health
www.health-ni.gov.uk



Health and
Social Care

September 2022

Introduction

The Department of Health's 'Know, Check, Ask' medication safety campaign has been developed in line with the WHO Third Global Patient Safety Challenge 'Medication Without Harm'. This Challenge aims to reduce severe avoidable harm from medication by 50% globally over the next 5 years. The intention of this campaign is to support two of the aims within The Department of Health's response to the WHO Challenge '[Transforming Medication Safety in Northern Ireland](#)'; increase public awareness of the importance of using medication safely and raise awareness among health and social care staff that medication safety is everyone's responsibility.

'**Know, Check, Ask**' is a simple three-step message that aims to empower patients and their carers to: become more involved in decisions about their medication, to ask questions and encourage them to report any issues and concerns. It also aims to encourage health and social care staff to recognise their roles and responsibilities in ensuring that medicines are used safely.

Background

It is estimated there are 11.7 million medication errors in Northern Ireland (NI) every year that cause 20 deaths and contribute to 57 inpatient deaths, costing the health service £1.9 million.

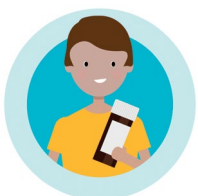


Medicines are the most commonly used medical intervention in NI, and at any one time 70% of our population take prescribed or over-the-counter medicines to treat or prevent ill health.

NI does have effective systems for the safe prescribing, dispensing and administration of medicines. However, errors can still occur and applying a whole system approach as outlined in '[Transforming Medication Safety in NI](#)' will support continual improvements that aim to prevent the risk of harm to patients.

The '**Know Check Ask**' campaign is part of that journey as it helps to create a social movement for change. The Campaign was initially launched in community pharmacies in May 2022 with further expansion in September 2022 to all health and social care staff across HSC.

'Everyone has a role to play to ensure safe and effective use of medicines'



Campaign objectives

- To raise awareness of the 'Know Check Ask' campaign and medication safety.
- To promote the use of a simple 3 step approach Know, Check, Ask.
- To reduce the risk of medication errors.
- To support patients (and/or their carers) in taking more responsibility for their own medication and health.

Medication safety is everyone's responsibility, health and social care staff can support the Medication Safety campaign by applying the values of the 'Know, Check, Ask' to your practice by:

Before you give it Know, Check, Ask.

! KNOW the medications you are prescribing, supplying or administering - what do they do, what benefits do they have and what are the side effects?

✓ CHECK that they are right for each individual patient, based on their health conditions and any other medications they are taking. Use the 5 rights of 'medication safety': Right patient, Right medicine, Right route, Right dose and Right time.

? ASK a colleague if you need to clarify anything about a patient's medication or condition, or think something is not quite right. Ask the patient if they understand the information you have given to them and suggest that keeping a list of their medicines can help them.

Campaign Audience

The audience is the general population, particularly those patients who are most likely to be on multiple and repeat medications, all people involved in Healthcare e.g. doctors, pharmacists, nurses, carers. The campaign is also applicable to children's medicines.

Campaign Messages

! KNOW ✓ CHECK ? ASK for **Patients**

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 health care professional if you're not sure.

! KNOW ✓ CHECK ? ASK for **Health and Social Care Staff**

Before you give it:

! KNOW your medications

✓ CHECK you have the right:

- patient
- medicine
- route
- dose
- time

? ASK

- your patient if they understand
- your colleague when you are unsure.

Campaign Materials

A range of resources both physical and digital media to support the 'Know, Check, Ask' campaign are available to help your teams promote medication safety to both staff and patients.

Printed resources

- **Leaflets:** 'My Medicines List' (for patients)
Word and editable versions available.
- **Public Poster:** Before you take it – 'Know, Check, Ask'.
- **Staff Poster:** Before you give it – 'Know, Check, Ask'.
- **Stickers:** Pharmacy only.

Digital resources

These resources will help your organisation to promote the KCA campaign across social media and internal channels.

- Animations and Social Media Gif files for both health and social care staff and patients.
- Videos from health and social care staff and service user.
- Guide for Health and social care staff.
- Slide deck - A PowerPoint presentation for Health and social care staff to use and adapt in local training sessions.

Training and Professional Development

A KCA Campaign Awareness Project ECHO session and an educational slide deck are available on the [HSC website](https://online.hscni.net).

Further information on Medicines Safety is available at:

- [DOH 5 year plan for Transforming Medicines Safety](#).
- [WHO Medication Without Harm](#).

Social media and digital assets

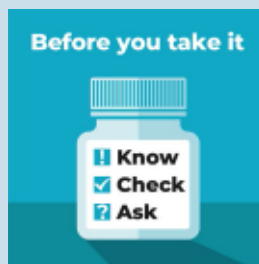
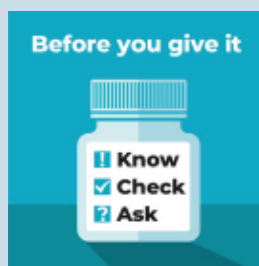
All social media and digital assets are available at <https://online.hscni.net/know-check-ask>

Feel free to share the 'Know Check Ask' campaign on your social media channels. Please tag Health and Social Care in your posts.

#KnowCheckAskHSCNI
#KnowCheckAsk
#MedicationSafety
#MedicationWithoutHarm

MY MEDICINES My allergies and how I react:						
Name:	Date of birth:		Date I filled out this form:			
Name of medicine or supplement	Strength	How much do I take?	I take it	I take it every day (Yes / No)	Why I take it?	My notes
Example: ABC tablets	25mg	2 tablets	Once in the morning	Yes	For my heart	Take with food

Not taking it anymore? Put a line through it. Always read the label on your medicines as well as checking your list.
This document belongs to the person named above. If taking a copy, please return the original to the person.



Twitter:
@HSC_NI



Facebook:
Health and Social Care NI



Instagram:
health_and_social_care

Campaign Activities

Health and social care staff can support the medication safety campaign by applying the values of 'Know, Check, Ask' by:

- Promoting 'Know Check Ask' branding and logo.
- Helping patients to keep a list of their medications see My Medicines List.
- Giving patients information about their medications.
- Promoting The Five Rights (5Rs):
 - the right patient
 - the right medicine
 - the right dose
 - the right route
 - the right time.
- Raising awareness of the 'Know Check Ask' campaign among other health and social care staff.
- Knowing the medicine you are supplying.

- Checking the medication is correct for the patient before supplying.
- Checking the instructions for the medicine before supplying eg. contra-indications, dosage, time.
- Asking a colleague if you are unsure about medication you are supplying.
- Promoting 5 Moments for Medication Safety:
 - Starting a medication
 - Taking my medication
 - Adding a medication
 - Reviewing my medication
 - Stopping my medication

The KCA patient leaflet 'My Medicines List' has been designed to support patients in taking responsibility for their medicines. It should be completed by the patient for their own records. This will allow patients to consider if they KNOW all their medicines, CHECK they are using them correctly and when/who to ASK for help.

My Medicines List can also be used:

- As a conversation opener e.g. Do you know your medicines? Do you keep a list? Can you describe and discuss your medicines with health and social care staff and family when you want to?
- To add to the prescription bags/purchases made in the pharmacy so it can be read at home.
- Potentially used in out-patients/out of hours or other healthcare setting in both primary and secondary care.
- To encourage people taking medication to keep an up-to-date 'My Medicines' list (including over the counter medicines) and explain why it can be helpful. Suggest keeping a photo of their personal 'My Medicines' list.
- To encourage patients to ask health and social care staff if they are unsure about their medicines e.g. how to take them, how often to take them etc.
- To encourage patients to bring an up-to-date medicines list to any medical appointments.
- To encourage patients to check with the pharmacist if they have any concerns about their medicines e.g. side effects or if they need additional support.

Tips for you and your staff to share with patients on using medicines safely:

- For medicines which are prescribed for you, the dose instructions are on the pharmacy label. If you're not clear how to take your medicines, ask your Healthcare professional.
- If you buy a medicine over-the-counter in a pharmacy, the instructions are on the package and in the leaflet.
- Never take a medicine that was prescribed for someone else. It may not be safe for you.
- Don't share your medicines with anyone else.
- All medicines come with a package leaflet which is sometimes known as a patient information leaflet. It is important to read this information as it helps make sure your medicine is right for you.
- The package leaflet will tell you about any special instructions for your medicine. It will also tell you if there are side effects you should look out for and what to do if you think you may have a side-effect.
- If you do not have a package leaflet for your medicine, you can ask your pharmacist for one.
- Communicating with your doctor, pharmacist and/or nurse is a really important part of making sure you get the most from your medicines. There is no such thing as a "silly question" when it comes to your health and medicines.
- Sharing your experience about your medicines is really important. If you find a medicine hard to take, or if it seems to be causing side effects, you and your healthcare professional can discuss how to change your medicines to suit you better.
- If you want to stop, reduce, or think you need more of a medicine, discuss this with a healthcare professional to make sure this is right for you and that any changes to your medicines are made safely.
- If patients wish to seek additional information about their medicine or condition, always use a trusted source such as the <https://bit.ly/NHSMedicinesA-Z>.