

# Taking multiple medicines? Support the Yellow Card scheme by reporting suspected side effects

The week will focus on polypharmacy: reporting side effects helps ensure safe use when taking multiple medicines.

Polypharmacy is defined as the simultaneous use of four or more medicines (prescription, over-the-counter general sales list, or traditional medicines) at the same time. Polypharmacy can increase the likelihood of a patient having side effects, medication errors, as well as the risk of interactions between medicines and with foods or herbal products.

Although polypharmacy is common in older people, anyone who routinely uses multiple medicines at the same time can be affected. This includes people with long term chronic conditions who subsequently regularly take multiple medicines. Studies show that one third of people over 75 years old take at least six medicines and over a million people taking eight or more medicines daily.

Healthcare professionals are also being encouraged to review their patients' medications intake, especially when prescribing, dispensing and administering multiple medicines, as well as being vigilant to monitor, detect and report suspected side effects to the Yellow Card Scheme. Reporting plays an important role in helping MHRA monitor the safe use of medicines to protect public health through effective regulation.

Mick Foy, Head of Pharmacovigilance Strategy, at the MHRA says:

Protecting patients is our topmost priority. Patients, their carers, and healthcare professionals are asked to report suspected side effects on a Yellow Card to the MHRA online or via the app. Reporting helps to improve the safety of medicines for all patients and can result in better tailored prescribing or administrative advice and information about monitoring, which can help improve adherence to treatment, and ultimately improves patient safety.