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Prescription errors – could you make a claim?



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According to a [study](#) undertaken by the General Medical Council published in May 2012, 1 in 20 prescriptions has an error. So, what is being done about serious prescription and dispensing errors and is it possible for a patient to make a claim against their doctor or pharmacist?

What is a prescription error?

Doctors have a duty to ensure that the medication and the dosage prescribed is correct and will not interfere with any pre-existing medical conditions.

There are a number of different prescription errors that can occur:

1. Medication prescribed for too long
2. Incorrect dosage
3. Medication prescribed to which a patient has a known allergy
4. Different medications prescribed that should not be prescribed together
5. Receiving medication intended for someone else

A prescription error can be made by a GP or a hospital doctor. A dispensing error is made when the pharmacist gives the patient a different medication to what is prescribed. Dispensing errors can also occur in nursing or care homes.

What are the implications of a prescription error?

Many medication errors go unnoticed or cause harm for a short period of time only. However, taking the wrong medicine can lead to significant problems such as stomach ulcers and bleeding, headaches, psychological

illnesses or an allergic reaction. In extreme circumstances, medicine errors can result in death. In fact, a 2018 academic study found that around 712 deaths occur each year in the UK because of adverse reactions to medicines.

The possible consequences of taking incorrect medication are three-fold. Firstly, you may suffer side effects from taking medication that you do not need. Secondly, if regular medication is stopped or changed prematurely you may suffer withdrawal symptoms, and thirdly, if you do not get correct medication to treat an illness then your symptom stemming from that condition or illness may persist.

Any form of medicine could be wrongly prescribed or dispensed, yet we often see claims for prescription errors involving epilepsy medication, diabetes medication, psychological medication such as antidepressants or blood pressure medication.

The effect that incorrect medication will largely depend on the type of medicine, what condition it was being used to treat, the duration that you were taking it and the dose prescribed.

Bringing a prescription error claim

If you feel that you or a loved one has been:

1. prescribed incorrect medication
2. dispensed incorrect medication

then you could have a claim for compensation. If you would like to discuss this further, please contact the [medical negligence](#) team at Lester Aldridge today.