

Many Americans Are Victims of Medical Mistakes

A recent survey shows that a surprising number of patients reports experiencing medical mistakes after doctor visits. The Wolters Kluwer Health Survey reported that almost one in three U.S. patients say that they themselves or a close family member or friend fell victim to medical mistakes.

Most Common Medical Errors

The number-one most common medical error is the [medication error](#). About 1.5 million people are injured every year from medication errors. Such an error can result from the doctor failing to pay attention to what medications the patient is already on, and giving him or her medications that should not be mixed. A drug mistake can also happen simply because the pharmacist cannot read messy handwriting on the script.

Hospital errors account for a large number of medical errors as well. These include falls, bed sores and infections. These symptoms happen when hospitals fail to give patients the care that they need. Family members can help greatly by watching for these problems at regular visits and making sure that their loved ones' needs are properly taken care of.

Medical errors can also result from poor communication between the doctor and the patient. Sometimes, patients (or even their doctors) do not receive test results or do not fully understand what they mean because physicians are not communicating effectively. About one-third of Americans believe that "miscommunication among hospital staff" leads to medical mistakes.

[Surgical errors](#) include both errors during surgical procedures and administrative errors outside of the operation that lead to surgical mistakes like operating on the wrong patient or on the wrong side or site. Other types of surgical mistakes include giving too much [anesthesia](#) or leaving a tool inside the patient's body.

High Levels of Concern Among Americans

The Wolters Kluwer Health Survey showed that 73 percent of Americans are concerned about medical errors. Over one in five people claim to have been misdiagnosed by doctors and about half have received incorrect bills. These are serious issues.

Some patients take matters into their own hands to counteract medical mistakes. For example, patients perform research on their own to make sure that what their doctors have suggested is correct or get second opinions from other medical professionals.

Patients need protection from medical errors that unfortunately happen all too often. Beyond receiving medical care to correct the error, a medical malpractice attorney can help the victim of a serious medical error recover his or her losses.