



## Medication Errors

Almost everyone in the modern world takes medication at some point in their lives. Most of the time, these medications are helpful, or at least not harmful. But sometimes they do hurt the person taking them. Some of these “adverse drug events” (ADEs) are inevitable—drugs can have harmful side effects, for instance—but sometimes the ADEs are not inevitable; they are due to an error in prescribing, administering, or taking the medication. Here are some statistics from the Institute of Medicine (IOM) about the incidence and cost of preventable medication errors.

At least **1.5 million** Preventable ADEs occur in the United States each year, although because it is difficult to get accurate information, the IOM believes the true number may be much higher.

**380,000 to 450,000** Preventable ADEs occur in hospitals each year.

**800,000** Preventable ADEs occur annually in long-term care facilities.

**530,000** Preventable ADEs occur each year among outpatient Medicare patients.

**\$2 billion** Is what preventable ADEs cost the healthcare system each year.



**\$8,750** Is the cost that each preventable ADE that takes place in a hospital adds to the cost of the hospital stay.

**\$3.5 billion** Is the total annual cost added to hospital stays because of preventable ADEs, based on a conservative estimate of 400,000 taking place each year.

**\$877 million** Is the annual cost of treating preventable medication errors in Medicare enrollees aged 65 and older.

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