

ALERT: Merck Announces Voluntary Recall of Vioxx

On September 30, 2004, Merck & Co., Inc. announced a voluntary worldwide recall of the drug Vioxx. This decision was based on the results of a study which showed an increased risk of heart attack and stroke in patients taking the drug for 18 months or more.

Complete information, including a press release about the recall can be found at www.merck.com, www.fda.gov, and www.vioxx.com.

Medical Mutual recommends that all physicians who have prescribed Vioxx to their patients take the following actions:

1. Identify all patients who have been prescribed the drug or given a sample of the drug. You may wish to contact all of the pharmacies in your area and obtain a list of patients from your practice who have received Vioxx.
2. Contact those patients either via phone or letter to let them know about the recall. Advise them to discontinue taking the drug and contact your office for alternative treatment options. Use the sample letters found at www.vioxx.com as a template for your mailing or phone call.
3. If you have an automated phone system, consider adding a message to all callers advising them of the recall.
4. If your practice has a "triage team," have them ask all patients if they are currently taking Vioxx, and if so, to discontinue use.

All providers will need to identify an alternative medication or treatment for patients currently taking Vioxx.

For more information, you may wish to contact the Board of Pharmacy in your state. In North Carolina, the phone number is 919-942-4454, and the website is www.ncbop.org. In Virginia, the phone number is 804-662-9911, and the website is <http://www.dhp.state.va.us/pharmacy/>.

You may also contact Medical Mutual's Risk Management Department at 1-800-662-7917.

DISCLAIMER: We are pleased to provide you with this information and hope that you find it useful, but we should remind you that it is not intended as legal advice. We have found that the use of such information reduces the risk of medical malpractice claims, but we cannot guarantee that using this information will prevent a claim brought against you.