

## **October is National Pharmacists Month: Get to Know Your Pharmacist!**

October is American Pharmacists Month. It's a good time to learn about all the great services that pharmacists can offer. Here's a list of services available to you.

### **A complete safety check**

Ever have a pharmacy clerk tell you that your prescription will be ready just as soon as the pharmacist checks it? Every prescription that is filled goes through checks for proper dosage, appropriate directions for use, potential drug interactions, and appropriate length of therapy. This check makes sure that you get the safest prescription possible.

### **Making that list**

Pharmacists can help you create a written medication list. This list should include all prescription, OTC (non-prescription) and herbal products that you are taking. It is important to keep this list with you at all times since this list could be life-saving in an emergency.

### **Helping you save money on prescriptions**

Medication costs can be high – even with prescription insurance. Your pharmacist can provide generic medications when they are available or suggest lower-cost medications that may be good alternatives to discuss with your doctor. They may also have discount programs or coupons that you can use to lower costs. Many pharmacies now offer medications at a low cost. Be sure to ask your pharmacist for advice on how to keep your medications affordable.

### **Advice on non-prescription and herbal products**

Pharmacists are the go-to health professionals for information about OTC (non-prescription) and herbal products. Pharmacists receive special education about these products and often have computer databases that provide patient education materials about them. So feel free to ask your pharmacist if an herbal product might work for you and if it might interact with your prescription medicines.

### **Getting those needed shots**

Pharmacists in all 50 states can give vaccinations. Going to a local pharmacy can be a convenient way to get your yearly flu shot. Some pharmacies offer a variety of vaccines including those needed for traveling the world.

### **Community talks**

Did you know that many pharmacists enjoy giving community talks about medications and health topics such as diabetes, high blood pressure, and arthritis? If you're interested in having a pharmacist talk to your local organization, contact a local

pharmacist or the state pharmacy association. A list of state associations can be found at <http://www.ncspae.org>.

### **Sorting out Medicare Part D**

For seniors, choosing a Medicare Part D prescription plan can be stressful. If you need help choosing a Medicare Part D plan, ask your pharmacist for advice. Be sure to have a complete list of medications so the pharmacist can help you determine which medicines would be covered under a certain plan.

### **Help with swallowing those horse pills**

If you need a medicine in a liquid form rather than in solid tablets or capsules pharmacists may be able to help. Most pharmacists can also prepare creams and ointments for you. Special, compounding pharmacies prepare different forms of medicines that are not commercially available for individual patients.

### **Reaching your health goals**

All pharmacists can provide advice on how to take medicines to get the most benefits. Some pharmacists also offer special educational programs in diabetes, high cholesterol, asthma, heart disease and even HIV/AIDS. These medication therapy management programs can help you take your medications the best way possible, give you suggestions on how to improve your health, and work with your doctor to discuss any needed therapy changes.

### **Safeguarding your health in the hospital**

Working with doctors and nurses, hospital pharmacists help ensure the medicines you receive are properly dosed and monitored. They also play a crucial role in selecting the medications used within the hospital and making sure that medication safety is a top priority.

### **Sorting out medications after a hospitalization**

People are often started on new medicines in the hospital. Pharmacists can help you learn about your new medicines and determine whether you should continue to take medicines you have at home. Knowing which medicines to take prevents drug duplications and interactions. Before you leave the hospital, ask for a pharmacist to review your medicines with you.

### **Just ask!**

Above all, pharmacists answer questions about medicines. Ask your pharmacist or check out <http://www.JustAskBlue.com>. Just Ask Blue has experienced pharmacists who provide written advice through e-mail so you can get advice in the privacy of your home. We can also send you links to web sites that provide credible, up-to-date information about your medicines and medical conditions.

**Know Your Medicines, Know Your Pharmacist!**

**[JustAskBlue.com](http://JustAskBlue.com)**