

# Stafford Pharmacy and Home Healthcare

## JANUARY NEWS

### Get the Most From your Pharmacy Experience

Pharmacists are the most easily accessible health professionals, however their services continue to be undervalued and underutilized. The pharmacist is considered the drug information expert and their knowledge should be used as such.



#### How can your pharmacist help you?

Here is a list of things that your pharmacist can help you with!

- Answer questions about your general health, disease prevention, disease, and acute illness
- Assess your condition and determine whether you should see your physician or another health care professional
- Provide advice on the use of over-the-counter medications, vitamins, herbal supplements, homeopathic remedies and prescription medications
- Offer assistance for those trying to quit smoking or reach weight loss (diet and exercise) goals
- Ensure accuracy, appropriateness, safety, effectiveness of the prescription written for you by your physician
- Provide you with information about your prescription medications and give guidance on how to take them appropriately
- Monitor and help manage the treatment of chronic medical conditions such as diabetes or high blood pressure
- Follow-up with you to assess the efficacy and safety of your medications
- Provide methods to make taking your medications easier, and to help you to remember to take your medications

#### How can I help the pharmacist help me?

In order for your pharmacist to provide the best care for you, they will need to know the answers to some important questions. Here are a few samples of the questions that your pharmacist will ask:

- Demographic information (including Alberta Health Care number)
- Do you have any allergies to any medications?
- What are your past and current medical conditions?
- What medications are you currently taking?
- What symptoms are you currently experiencing?
- Are you using any over-the-counter medications, herbals, or vitamins?

The answers to these questions are extremely important, and help the pharmacist provide advice or treatment properly. Be honest when you answer these questions. The pharmacist cannot share your health information with anyone as they are bound by the privacy act. Withholding about your health from the pharmacist could put you at risk. For example, if the doctor writes a prescription for you for nitroglycerine and you take it to a pharmacy, the pharmacist needs to know what other medications you take. If you take Viagra, but have it filled at another pharmacy and are embarrassed to tell this pharmacist it could result in a life threatening interaction. **Never be afraid to talk to your pharmacist, this tip could save your life.**



#### Choose one pharmacy and stick with it.

Your pharmacist is an important part of your healthcare team. The more your pharmacist knows about your health, the better they are able to help. Using only one pharmacy greatly helps to reduce the chance of duplication of therapy and drug interactions. **Every year thousands of people are admitted to the hospital because of the improper use of medications.** Using one pharmacy ensures the pharmacist is aware of any potential problems with your medication therapy.



#### How can you ensure you are using your medications safely?

Remember the 3R's of medication safety.

- 1) **Risk**— All medications (over-the-counter and prescription), herbals, and vitamins have risks associated with taking them. Before using anything, check with your pharmacist to ensure that the benefit of the product outweighs the risk.
- 2) **Respect**—Respect the power of the medication and its ability to benefit you, but also to cause harm if used inappropriately.
- 3) **Responsibility**— Take responsibility to learn about your medications and how to use them correctly. When in doubt ask! There is no such thing as a stupid question!

Visit our newly renovated website at: [www.staffordpharmacy.com](http://www.staffordpharmacy.com)

## Rx Center— Allergy vs. Intolerance

It is important for your pharmacist to be aware of what medications you are allergic to! Be sure your pharmacist has an up to date list of all medications, food and other allergens that you are allergic to so they can prevent you from receiving a medication that you cannot have.

### What is an medication allergy?

A true drug allergy results from a series of chemical steps within the body that produce the allergic reaction to a medication.

### When does a medication allergy occur?

There are a few different types of allergic reactions to medications that can occur.

Some allergic reactions take time to develop and will occur after you have been taking the medication for 5-10 days. These types of reactions include skin rash, hives, and itching skin.

More serious reactions including anaphylaxis occur more rapidly after ad-

ministration of a medication (typically within 1 hour). Symptoms of anaphylaxis include: swelling of lips, tongue and face, difficulty breathing, rapid breathing, dizziness, and lightheadedness.

### How are allergies to medications treated?

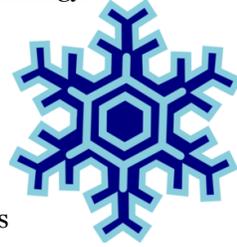
Minor allergic reactions such as rashes or hives can be treated with anti-histamines such as diphenhydramine (Benadryl®) or cetirizine (Reactine®). Topical creams can also be used to stop itching.

Anaphylaxis is a medical emergency and requires immediate medical attention. People who have experienced an anaphylactic reaction in the past should carry an Epi Pen® (epinephrine injection) at all times.

Ask your pharmacist for advice on how to treat minor allergic reaction!

### What are some common allergy causing drugs?

- Penicillin
- Sulfa Drugs
- Anti-convulsants
- Iodine containing dyes



### What is a medication intolerance?

Many medications have unpleasant side effects that people often mistake as allergies. For example, if Demerol or Tylenol #3 cause a person nausea, stomach upset or make them feel “loopy” these are not allergies, but rather common adverse reaction to them. It is very important to record any reactions you have had to medications in the past to prevent them from occurring again. Both allergies and intolerances should be reported to your pharmacist so that they can prevent future re-occurrences!!

## Mineral Spotlight— Calcium

### **What is Calcium?**

Calcium is the most common mineral in the body. It is found primarily in bones and teeth.

### **What does Calcium do?**

Calcium is the major structural element in bones and teeth. Calcium also plays a role in opening and closing of blood vessels, nerve function and muscle contraction.

### **How common is calcium deficiency?**

A true deficiency of calcium is uncommon as long as a person consumes adequate amounts in their diet.

### **What foods is Calcium found in?**

Calcium is found in dairy products such as milk, yogurt and cheese. Small amounts are found in some vegetable such as broccoli.

### **Who should consider supplementing with Calcium?**

People eating well rounded healthy diets containing dairy will generally get enough calcium. Certain medications can decrease the amount of calcium in the body. These medication include birth control and anti-seizure medications. Those taking these medications, people drinking more than 2 cups of caffeinated drinks per day, and women over the age of 50 at risk of developing osteoporosis should consider supplementation.

### **I saw in the news that calcium supplementation is linked to increased heart attacks, is this true?**

Yes and no. Calcium supplementation **alone** may potentially lead to calcification of blood vessels. **Calcium should never be taken without supplementation with Vitamin D.**

### **There are many different kinds of calcium on the shelf, which one should I buy?**

Ask your pharmacist which calcium supplement is right for you. Your pharmacist will tell you how much to take and when to take it!

