

## Home Health Care Safety Information

### Introduction

We want to make sure that your home medical treatment is provided in a safe and effective way. Everyone has a part in promoting safety. This includes you, the patient, and your caregivers at home.

These pages are written to give our patients some easy and helpful tips on how to make your home therapy a safe one.

If you have any questions about safety that aren't in this booklet, please call our pharmacy and we will be happy to give you recommendations for your individual needs.

We encourage all of our patients to contact us to talk about any concerns they have regarding safety, and to share any ideas you might have on making home care safer or better. Your service from our pharmacy will never be negatively affected because you express ideas or concerns.

### What to Do If You Get Hurt

In case of emergency contact:

Fire:	
Police:	
Ambulance:	
Hospital:	
Home Care Agency:	
Doctor:	
Vital Care:	
National Poison Control Hotline:	(800) 222-1222

### Medication Safety

As a patient, you have an important part to play in the safety of your treatment with medications. Medications that are given by infusion (intravenous or by injection) can have serious side effects if given incorrectly.

We take every precaution when we prepare your medication in our pharmacy; however, we encourage every patient to “speak up” and call us if you have ANY concern about your medication, or if you have ANY suspicion that an error may have occurred in the dispensing or the administration of your medication.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) also welcomes you to report any side effects of your medication and has required us to provide you with the following information:

“Call your doctor for medical advice about side effects. You may report side effects to FDA at 1-800-FDA-1088.”

### Fire Safety

- ✓ Smoke detectors should be installed in your home. Make sure you change the batteries at least every six months. If appropriate, you may consider carbon monoxide detectors as well. Ask your local fire department if you should have one in your home.
- ✓ Have a fire extinguisher in your home, and have it tested regularly to make sure it is still charged and in working order.
- ✓ Have a plan for escape in the event of a fire. Discuss this plan with your family.
- ✓ If you use oxygen in your home, make sure you understand the hazards of smoking near oxygen. Review the precautions. If you aren't sure, ask your oxygen provider what they are.
- ✓ If you are using electrical medical equipment, make sure to review the instruction sheets for that equipment. Read the section on electrical safety.

### Electrical Safety

- ✓ Make sure that all medical equipment is plugged into a properly grounded electrical outlet.
- ✓ If you have to use a three-prong adapter, make sure it is properly installed by attaching the ground wire to the plug outlet screw.
- ✓ Use only good quality outlet “extenders” or “power strips” with internal circuit breakers. Don't use cheap extension cords.

### Chemical Safety

- ✓ Make sure that all household chemicals are properly labeled and that you understand safety considerations for each.
- ✓ Chemicals should be stored properly away from heat sources and out of reach of children and pets.

- ✓ Be sure you have the national poison control hotline number posted near the telephone for reference in the event of an emergency.

#### The Bathroom

- ✓ Because of the smooth surfaces, the bathroom can be a very dangerous place, especially for persons who are unsteady.
- ✓ Use non-slip rugs on the floor to prevent slipping.
- ✓ Install a grab-bar on the shower wall, and non-slip footing strips inside the tub or shower.
- ✓ Ask your medical equipment provider about a shower bench you can sit on in the shower.
- ✓ If you have difficulty sitting and getting up, ask about a raised toilet seat with arm supports to make it easier to get on and off the commode.
- ✓ If you have problems sensing hot and cold, you should consider lowering the temperature setting of your water heater so you do not accidentally scald yourself without realizing it.

#### The Bedroom

- ✓ It's important to make a safe, well-planned, and comfortable bedroom since a lot of your recuperation and home therapy may occur there.
- ✓ Ask your home medical provider about a hospital bed. These beds raise and lower so you can sit up, recline, and adjust your knees.
- ✓ Bed rails may be a good idea, especially if you have a tendency to roll in bed at night.
- ✓ If you have difficulty walking, inquire about a bedside commode so you do not have to walk to the bathroom to use the toilet.
- ✓ Make sure you can easily reach the light switches, and other important things you might need through the day or night.
- ✓ Install night lights to help you find your way in the dark at night.
- ✓ If you are using an IV pole for your IV or enteral therapy, make sure that all furniture, loose carpets, and electrical cords are out of the way so you do not trip and fall while walking with the pole.

#### The Kitchen

- ✓ Your kitchen should be organized so you can easily reach and use the common items, especially during your recuperation while you are still a bit weak.
- ✓ Have a friend or health care worker remove all common small appliances and utensils from cabinets, and place them on your counters where you can easily use them.

- ✓ Have a chair brought into the kitchen to the counter work area if you have difficulty standing.
- ✓ Be careful lifting pots and pans. Not only might they be hot, but they can be heavy as well. Use padded mitts to firmly grasp pans and pots on both sides.
- ✓ Ask your kitchen or hardware store about utensils for manually impaired or arthritic persons, including:
  - Basic electric can openers
  - Bottle and jar openers
  - Large handled utensils
- ✓ When working at your stove, be very careful that intravenous or tube feeding catheters and tubing do not hang over the heat. They can be flammable.

### Preventing Falls

- ✓ If you are receiving multiple medications, including oral medications, you may be at a higher risk of falling. This is especially true if you are taking medications that affect your alertness, blood pressure, or balance. Our pharmacy will ask you to list all the medications you are currently taking, or we will ask your nursing agency for this information.
- ✓ If you are now using assistant devices for ambulating (walking), here are some key points.
  - Install guardrails on stairs to give you additional support if you are using a cane or are unsteady.
  - If you are using a walker or wheelchair, you may need a ramp to get into or out of the house. Ramps can be purchased ready-made, or may be constructed for you. Talk to your home medical equipment provider about available options.

### Reporting Problems and Giving Praise

If you have a problem, or concern about our service we encourage you to contact our manager to report it as soon as you discover the issue. The contact phone number was given to you on a service introduction letter when we first started your therapy. We make every attempt to investigate an issue and get back to you with a response within three business days or less. Some issues, particularly billing issues, may take longer to investigate and we ask for your patience in those situations.

If your pharmacy is accredited by the Accreditation Commission for Health Care (ACHC), you may contact them to express a concern, a complaint, or a compliment regarding our services. They can be reached at (919) 785-1214.

If your pharmacy is accredited by the Healthcare Quality Association on Accreditation (HQAA), you may contact them to express a concern, a complaint, or a compliment regarding our services. They can be reached at (866) 909-4722.

If your pharmacy is accredited by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) you may contact them to express a concern, a complaint, or a compliment regarding our services. They can be reached at (630) 792-5800.

### Other Reading Materials

[“Check for Safety: A Home Fall Prevention Checklist for Older Adults”](#) (CDC Publication)

[“Speak Up: Take Medication Safely”](#) (TJC Publication)

[“Speak Up: Reduce Your Risk of Falling”](#) (TJC Publication)

[“Fire Safety Checklist for Older Adults”](#) (FEMA Publication)