

Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Are You Medicine Smart™? - Medicine Safety Group Tells How @ www.talkaboutrx.org

*23rd annual NCPIE “Talk About Prescriptions” Month observance
works to improve medicine communication and reduce preventable adverse drug reactions*

(Bethesda, MD - October 1, 2008) According to recent data from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), patients in the United States made over 1.1 billion visits to physician offices and hospital outpatient and emergency departments in 2006. That’s an average of four visits per person per year. During that same year seven out of 10 visits (70 percent) had at least one medication provided, prescribed, or continued.¹ Conservatively, the Institute of Medicine, in a recent report concludes that there are at least 1.5 million preventable adverse drug events (ADEs) in the U.S. each year – and it may even be much higher.²

To help combat preventable adverse drug events, particularly those triggered by taking prescription or over-the-counter (OTC) medicines that do not work safely when taken together or taking too much of the same active ingredient, the **National Council on Patient Information and Education (NCPIE)** today dedicated its 2008 **“Talk About Prescriptions” Month** observance to helping consumers be **“Medicine Smart™”** whenever medicines are part of the treatment regimen.

“One of the key messages to consumers for this year’s **‘Talk About Prescriptions’ Month** is, if you are taking a medicine -- and especially if you are taking several medicines at the same time, including prescription or over-the-counter (OTC) -- it's important to keep a current list of all of the medicines you are taking, including the doses and how you take each medicine; and be sure to include vitamins, dietary supplements, or herbal remedies,” said Ray Bullman, NCPIE’s Executive Vice President. “Sharing your updated medicine list with your doctor, physician assistant, or nurse practitioner at every medical visit, and providing a copy to the pharmacist can go a long way in promoting safe and appropriate medicine use,” noted NCPIE’s Bullman.

By sharing and discussing an up-to-date medicine list at every medical visit, consumers can avoid taking medicines that should not be taken in combination. An updated list also provides a tool for your healthcare professionals to spot and stop duplicate or unnecessary medicines. Finally, according to NCPIE, don't forget to make a copy of your medicine list for a family member or other loved one. That way, if a medical emergency happens, your medicine list can be provided to the emergency room or hospital.

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The NCPIE coalition also offers other important medicine safety advice to consumers. Being “**Medicine Smart™**” also means getting all the information necessary to use medicine correctly. That means asking questions and sharing important information about past medicine use to better ensure that you reduce risks and get the most benefit from your treatment. If you're not sure what questions to ask about your medicine - see "*10 Important Questions to Help You Be Medicine Smart™*" (attached).

NCPIE’s 23rd annual “**Talk About Prescriptions**” Month materials include an extensive list of online sites where consumers, caregivers, and healthcare professionals can access and download a medicine list for themselves, their loved ones, or their patients. Many can be completed and saved on the computer, updated as needed, and then printed out in advance of medical appointments. Some can easily be completed the old fashioned way -- with a pencil or pen.

Additional practical tools are provided by NCPIE at www.talkaboutrx.org, including a series of free, downloadable “**mini-posters**” that are ideal for displaying wherever consumers and patients congregate. They can also be used as print ads in electronic newsletters and magazines.

Decreasing the health and economic toll from preventable adverse drug events is achievable, but only if consumers and their healthcare providers work closely together can a “**Medicine Smart™**” society be achieved.

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References

¹Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Online Media Release, August 06, 2008; See <http://www.cdc.gov/media/pressrel/2008/r080806.htm>; Contact: CDC/NCHS Office of Communication, Phone: 301-458-4800

²Preventing Medication Errors: Quality Chasm Series. Committee on Identifying and Preventing Medication Errors, Institute of Medicine. See <http://www.iom.edu/CMS/3809/22526/35939.aspx>

About the National Council on Patient Information and Education (NCPIE)

Organized in 1982, The **National Council on Patient Information (NCPIE)** is a non-profit coalition of over 100 organizations committed to stimulating and improving communication between consumers and health care professionals about the safe and appropriate use of medicines. In addition to sponsoring "Talk About Prescriptions" Month (<http://www.talkaboutrx.org>), NCPIE hosts the "Be MedWise" campaign promoting wise use of over-the-counter medicines (<http://www.bemedwise.org>).



www.talkaboutrx.org

10 Important Questions to Help You Be “Medicine Smart™”

Here are 10 important questions from the **National Council on Patient Information and Education (NCPPIE)** to help you get the information you need to use medicines appropriately. Be sure to ask your doctor, physician assistant, nurse practitioner, and pharmacist these questions when medicines are part of your treatment plan.

1. What is the name of the medicine and what is it for? Is this the brand name or the generic name?
2. Is a generic version of this medicine available?
3. How and when do I take it - and for how long?
4. What foods, drinks, other medicines, dietary supplements, or activities should I avoid while taking this medicine?
5. When should I expect the medicine to begin to work, and how will I know if it is working? Are there any tests required with this medicine (for example, to check liver or kidney function)?
6. Are there any side effects, what are they, and what do I do if they occur?
7. Will this medicine work safely with the other prescription and nonprescription medicines I am taking? Will it work safely with any dietary / herbal supplements I am taking?
8. Do I need to get a refill? When?
9. How should I store this medicine?
10. Is there any written information available about the medicine? (Is it available in large print or a language other than English?)

And remember, when medicines are prescribed, tell your healthcare professionals:

- All of your medical conditions and the names of doctors providing treatment
- The names of all medicines and other products you are taking, including:
 - * Prescription and nonprescription medicines
 - * Dietary supplements / herbal remedies, vitamins or minerals
 - * Laxatives
 - * Pain relievers
 - * Sleeping aids
- Any problems you are having with your medicines;
- The medicines to which you are allergic;
- If you are, or might be pregnant.