

## ISJ HEALTHY LIVING

# What pharmacists do for you

Imagine that you are feeling very sick on a Sunday afternoon and your regular doctor is not in. You can't hold out until Monday, so you visit an immediate care clinic. The physician there asks you if you are taking any medications, and either your ears are too plugged to hear him, or you are just so sick that you forget to tell him that you are on a blood thinner. He prescribes an antibiotic and sends you on your way. Luckily, you are able to get the prescription filled at your regular pharmacy as it is open on this Sunday afternoon. The pharmacist has the names of all of your regular medications on file and notices that this antibiotic can interfere with the effectiveness of your blood thinner. She contacts the doctor, and together they decide if you should have a different antibiotic that won't have an adverse reaction to your other medication. Your pharmacist has just prevented you from having a serious event because of a drug interaction; and you may not even know about it.

Pharmacists do this everyday with every prescription that they fill. If they have the benefit of knowing what other medicines you are taking, they can check to see if you are at a greater risk for any medication-related adverse effects. So, what if you don't get your medications filled at the same pharmacy? You should always tell the pharmacist what medications you take and ask if there are any interactions with your new prescription. If you or someone you know has to take more than one or two medications, make a list that can be carried with you so it is available to show not only to your pharmacist, but also to doctors, dentists and other health care providers.

Pharmacists are a very important part of the health care team and communicating with them is the key. The students and faculty at Idaho State University's College of Pharmacy are joining with the American Pharmacists Association to celebrate American Pharmacist's Month in October. Our goal is to educate the community on the valuable role of the pharmacist. This month's theme is "Know Your

## COMMENTARY JENNIFER HORTON



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Medicine, Know your Pharmacist," stressing the importance of communicating with your pharmacist to get the most out of your medication therapy. Pharmacists are readily available to help you understand why, how, and when to take your medications. They can tell you what foods, vitamins, over-the-counter medicines, or activities may interfere with your illness or with your medications.

So what value does a pharmacist serve if you don't take any prescription medications? The community pharmacist is available to answer your questions about preventing common illnesses, maintaining a healthy weight, quitting smoking or recommend-

ing an over-the-counter medicine for allergy symptoms. If you are having trouble getting sleep, if you have a rash, or if you have terrible heartburn from your aunt's chili—the pharmacist has advice that can help. They can also provide immunizations against the flu, pneumonia and shingles.

Pharmacists have at least six years of education. This education is focused on medications and medication therapies, and it is inclusive of the majority of diseases and common illnesses. Pharmacists earn a doctoral degree, but many of them have also earned degrees in other fields like business, education or communications. Their career paths can include research, hospital pharmacy, community pharmacy, long-term care and emergency preparedness. Many pharmacists volunteer their time to educate the community, mentor student pharmacists or optimize medication therapies at local care facilities. The focus of every pharmacist is the health and well-being of their patients.

During October, students and faculty of the College of Pharmacy will be honoring the profession. Editorials on various health topics will be published once a week. You will also see us at several flu immunization clinics and health fairs in the community. To top it all off,

our college will be hosting an open house for the public on October 24, at 4 p.m. at the ISU College of Pharmacy located at 970 S. Fifth Avenue in Pocatello. During the open house, we will be offering blood pressure and blood glucose screenings, cholesterol screenings, heartburn education and adult flu vaccinations. The first 50 vaccinations will be free, and the subsequent vaccinations will be available at a reduced price. We will also be available to answer any questions you may have about your medications. Please join us in honoring our local pharmacists, and celebrate your health this month by getting to know your medications and your pharmacist.

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