

## Radio Messages for Safe Medicine Use

### How to Use the attached “Talk About Prescriptions” Radio Public Service Talking Points:

1. Attached is a sample cover letter and live-read copy for two (2) public service messages and talking points for six (6) more on-air messages about safe medicine use. The cover letter makes it easy for you to invite radio stations in your community to help their listeners communicate more effectively with their healthcare providers whenever medicines are prescribed as part of the health treatment.
2. Scan or cut and paste the sample cover letter on your letterhead, attach a copy of the enclosed public service announcement talking points and mail or (better yet) personally deliver this information to local radio station public service directors and on-air personalities. Impress on them the role that they can play in reaching consumers about how important good communication is whenever medicines are prescribed or dispensed.
3. Reinforce the fact that radio stations have the capacity to equip thousands of consumers (their listeners) with important information and questions that should be asked about medication instructions, precautions, side effects and the availability of useful written information about the medicine to help consumers avoid medication errors and to take their medicines correctly.
4. The information in the talking points is **“evergreen.”** That means it can be used year-round to help your listeners prevent medication error, so it can be shared with listeners not just in October, but during the holiday season at the end of the year, when celebrations often include alcoholic beverages, which should not be consumed along with certain medicines. Urge your local radio stations to place these messages in the “to air” cycle for at least six months.
5. Also, be sure to tell them that you’ll be listening! And that you appreciate their help in getting this important information out to their listeners.

## Sample Cover Letter

Dear Public Service Director:

This October is once again national “**Talk About Prescriptions**” Month. That’s an ideal time to include the attached public service messages in your programming schedule. It’s also a great time to begin informing your listeners that asking a few simple questions and reading carefully the written print-out about the medicine whenever they receive a new or refill prescription can help them recognize / manage side effects and avoid harmful interactions between the medicines they’re taking and certain foods and drinks.

According to the Institute of Medicine’s recent report, “*Preventing Medication Errors*,” (July 006) we all have a role to play in avoiding harm from the over 1.5 million preventable adverse drug events that occur with medication errors, and in maximizing the benefit of the medicines we take. Consider, for example, that in hospitals, errors are common during every step of the medication process. In fact, when all types of errors are considered, recent studies estimate between 380,000 to 450,000 preventable adverse drug events in hospitals each year. That means that a hospital patient can expect on average to be subjected to more than one medication error each day.

These medication errors are undoubtedly costly -- to patients, their families, their employers, and to hospitals, health-care providers, and insurance companies. According to the IOM, one study found that each preventable ADE that took place in a hospital added about \$8,750 (in 2006 dollars) to the cost of the hospital stay. Assuming 400,000 of these events each year -a conservative estimate - the total annual cost would be \$3.5 billion in this one group alone.

Medication errors and medication misuse, often caused by patients’ lack of understanding or information about their medicine regimen, is a significant national public health issue. In fact, the National Council on Patient Information and Education (NCPIE), which sponsors “**Talk About Prescriptions**” Month each October, refers to it as “America’s *Other* Drug Problem.

(Insert your organization’s name here) needs your help as a community partner to alert listeners about avoidable risks associated with improper medicine use, and what consumers can do to protect their health and that of family members as well. The attached talking points for public service messages are for you to use to convey important messages to your listeners. Use them in October and beyond as the basis for public service announcements or as facts for your on-air personalities to share with listeners during their broadcasts.

These messages only take a few seconds to share, but they can help your listeners avoid medication errors and gain the benefits of proper medicine use and better health.

Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

Name  
Title

Enclosure: Live Read copy (2)  
Talking Points for Radio Public Service Messages (6)

## Live-Read Copy & Talking Points for Radio Public Service Messages

### Live-Read Copy (2)

**Ann:** The next time you fill a prescription medicine, be sure you also get written information about the medicine to read at home. Your medicine is important to your good health. So is your medicine information. *Be sure to read it, and heed it.* A message from the National Council on Patient Information and Education and (**insert radio call letters**). Visit [www.talkaboutrx.org](http://www.talkaboutrx.org) for details.

**Ann:** *Just got a new prescription medicine?* Be sure to take it right. Read carefully the written information that comes with the medicine. It includes useful information about possible side effects, other medicines, foods, or drinks to avoid, and lots more. Your medicine is important. So is your medicine information. Be sure to read it, and heed it. And remember to follow this important rule about your medicines: *When in doubt, ask first.* Your healthcare professional can help you get the facts you need to use your medicines correctly. A message from the National Council on Patient Information and Education and (**insert station call letters**). Visit [www.talkaboutrx.org](http://www.talkaboutrx.org) for details.

### Talking Points (6)

1. *What can you do to avoid medication errors?* The National Council on Patient Information and Education and (**insert station call letters**) wants you to keep a current list of all the medicines you are taking. One of the best ways to help protect yourself when it comes to medicines is to keep an updated list of the prescription and nonprescription medicines and other products, like vitamins and minerals or dietary supplements that you are taking. And what do you do with this updated list? Be sure to take your medicine list with you whenever you visit a health care provider and have him or her review it with you, especially before any new medicine is prescribed or recommended for you.
2. According to the National Council on Patient Information and Education, two out of three doctor's visits result in a prescription. That's about **3 billion** prescriptions every year. Unfortunately, up to half of these medicines are taken improperly, sometimes resulting in extra doctor visits, harmful drug interactions, avoidable side effects, and sometimes even hospitalization or death. *What can you do to help ensure that your medicine works right?* Whenever you get a new prescription, take time to read carefully the printed information that accompanies the medicine. Keep it nearby in case you want to read it again. And remember to follow this important rule about your medicines: *When in doubt, ask first.* Your healthcare professional can help you get the facts you need to use your medicines correctly.
3. Has your doctor given you a new prescription? Did you find out what you need to know to use your medicine safely? By asking these questions, you're well on your way to getting the information you need to use your medicines right:
  - ✓ What is the name of the medicine, and what is it supposed to do?
  - ✓ Is this the brand name or the generic name?
  - ✓ How and when do I take it, and for how long?

- ✓ What foods, drinks, other medicines, or activities should I avoid while taking this medicine?
  - ✓ Are there any side effects, and what do I do if they occur?
  - ✓ Will this new prescription work safely with the other medicines I am taking?
  - ✓ Is there any written information available about the medicine?
4. Whenever you get a new prescription from your doctor or pharmacist, the National Council on Patient Information and Education encourages you to share the following information:
- ✓ The names of all the medicines you are taking, including nonprescription medicines, vitamins, minerals, laxatives, pain relievers, and sleeping aids.
  - ✓ Any problems you are having with your medicines.
  - ✓ Any medicines to which you are allergic.
  - ✓ If you are, or could be pregnant.
5. The National Council on Patient Information and Education and (**insert station call letters**) encourage listeners to take an active part in decisions about your medical treatment. Don't be afraid to ask questions and to talk about your concerns. Here are some points to cover whenever a new medicine is prescribed for you:
- ✓ Ask about all parts of your treatment, including diet changes, exercise, and medicines;
  - ✓ Ask about the risks and benefits of each medicine or other treatment you might get.
  - ✓ Ask how often you or your doctor will have to check to tell how well the medicine is working (checking your cholesterol level for example if you are taking a medicine to lower it).
6. The National Council on Patient Information and Education and (**insert station call letters**) encourages listeners to *take their medicines in for a "Medicine Check-Up."* A medicine check-up is a good way for you and your health care professionals to spot any problems that might be caused by your medicine regimen. For example, during the medicine check-up, your doctor or pharmacist can check for duplicate or out-dated medicines, medicines that may no longer be necessary, and medicines that should not be taken together. You can also ask questions about how to take your medicines most effectively and safely. Be sure to call your doctor or pharmacist to schedule your next Medicine Check-Up.