

Protect Yourself: A Pain Patient's Guide to Medication Safety

Safety Begins at the Doctor's Office Work with your physician to increase medication safety. Request yearly updated paperwork, such as: diagnostic & treatment agreement, which includes: your name, diagnoses & any medical devices, also pharmacy's address, phone and fax, plus the rules. Signed by physician/you & dated. Keep copy in wallet/purse & car. **(Keep original in safe place.)**

Safety at the Pharmacy Provide a copy of your physician paperwork to pharmacist. Put pharmacy's drug info sheets on each med & your receipt in your car w/physician paperwork. Switch out each month--most recent info always in the car. If pulled over, *you can prove which meds you have & that they're prescribed to you.* Meds are tax deductible: keep receipts! You may feel safer to use a pill sorter--remember **it's best to carry them in the original pharmacy containers.**

Safety at Home Theft Deterrent Tips: 1. Use a safe and/or security system. 2. Keep meds & valuables out of view thru doors/windows. 3. Don't tell *anyone* where they're stored, or exactly what meds you take. 4. Don't share sensitive info unless absolutely necessary—even medical professionals don't treat your pain. Be cautious around people with access to house keys/your address.

Protect Kids/Pets: 1. Keep meds locked up/in a safe—high shelves aren't safe. 2. *Child-resistant* isn't the same as *child-proof*, kids may open them. 3. Discard unused meds **properly**. 4. Keep meds with you—never leave within a child's reach, even for seconds. 5a. Dropped pills can kill—pick up ASAP, if able. 5b. Ask available loved one/caregiver to help. 5c. Remove pets/kids from area til pills are picked up. 6. Vacuum home/car \ weekly, esp. under things pills could roll under. 7. Keep purses/bags out of reach, even those belonging to others. 8. Inform friends, relatives, sitters of these dangers.

Safety in the Car The Basics: Use all applicable home tips. 1. Always lock doors/windows. 2. Don't leave meds or things of value in view--hide or keep them with you. 3. Keep an **ACLU card** in the car. Pulled Over? Put pain meds out of sight. Zip purse closed. Anything in view doesn't require a warrant. Get out: license, insurance & registration, then put hands on the wheel. Don't admit to violations: "I don't know." When asked if they can search, say: "I do not consent to a search." The Rules: Be calm. Remain silent. You have the right to refuse searches/don't have to let them in. Don't get tricked—police can lie. Ask if you're free to go. Don't run, ever. Never touch an officer. Report misconduct. Useful Phrases: "Am I under arrest, or am I free to go?" "Am I being charged? With what?" "I retain my fourth amendment rights against unlawful search & seizure." **Remain silent when possible!** Arrested? Immediately say: "I do not wish to be questioned without a lawyer present. I want an attorney." Then remain silent. Ask attorney how to best ensure access to meds—your life is at stake.

Safety When You Travel Reservations: Request cell phone updates on your flight. Before packing, review the [TSA Disabled Travelers](#) site & their [home page](#) for up-to-the-minute changes. Packing: NEVER PUT MEDS IN CHECKED LUGGAGE--Keep them with you at all times. Bring doctor's paperwork & pharmacy paperwork with you. Keep extra copies of each in the checked bag. Departure: Leave extra time to deal with TSA process. Checking In: Smile, be polite. Disclose disability & request any special assistance needed. It may help to wear a **medical alert bracelet**. Have fragile medical equipment? Explain where it is & request private pat-down screening. **It's best to bring fact sheet on the device.** See [Traveler's Civil Rights](#)—if you feel rights were violated, go to [TSA's Traveler Redress](#).

OTHER TIPS: 1. Follow physician rules to the letter or you jeopardize your pain care. 2. Check prescriptions for errors before you leave the doctor's office. 3. Check each bottle at the pharmacy before accepting them. 4. Avoid taking pain meds in public—go to a restroom if necessary. 5. Never increase pain meds on your own; if pain increases, discuss with your physician. 6. Don't drink alcohol or take illicit drugs—deadly consequences are possible. 7. Never share your pain meds with anyone-or-accept medication from others. 8. Tell your doctor all meds you're taking, including vitamins & supplements. 9. Discuss all side effects/concerns with your doctor—he/she may have solutions.