

## ASK YOUR PHARMACIST

Your pharmacist is your medication expert and can provide advice and information on a wide range of health issues

# Careers in Pharmacy

Pharmacy is an exciting and challenging career. As part of the health care team, a pharmacist's primary goal is to help improve the quality of life of their patients by making sure they are receiving optimal drug therapy. This is called pharmaceutical care — it is all about working together to identify, prevent and solve medication problems.



### How Do I Become a Pharmacist?

To be a pharmacist, you need to be interested in helping people and have excellent communication and problem-solving skills. Pharmacy students spend four or five years in university to obtain a Bachelor of Science in Pharmacy degree. Courses include pharmacology (how drugs work), therapeutics (how diseases are treated), communication, chemistry and drug law. To be licensed to practice, pharmacists must also write national exams and do an internship with a licensed pharmacist (requirements vary by province).

### Where Do Pharmacists Work?

Most pharmacists work in community pharmacies (drug stores) or in hospitals. Many community pharmacists own and manage their own pharmacy. Hospital pharmacists often specialize in fields such as cancer treatment, infectious diseases, pediatrics and research. Career opportunities for pharmacists are endless — in the pharmaceutical industry, teaching, government, pharmacy associations or as consultants.

### What Exactly Do Pharmacists Do?

To make sure medications are safe and effective for their patients, pharmacists:

- ◆ review and evaluate each patient's drug therapy
- ◆ monitor how well medications are working and look out for any unwanted reactions, allergies or drug interactions
- ◆ verify and dispense prescriptions, with the assistance of pharmacy technicians
- ◆ discuss with the patient how to take their medications, what they can expect from them and provide information about benefits, risks and possible side effects
- ◆ provide advice on nonprescription medications and how to manage minor symptoms or ailments
- ◆ alert patients to the need to see their doctor or go to an emergency department
- ◆ discuss healthy lifestyle choices to prevent disease
- ◆ keep confidential, computerized medication records for each patient

- ◆ work closely with physicians and other health care providers and provide drug information.

### Life-long Learning

Education doesn't stop after university. Because many new drugs are introduced each year, a pharmacist is always learning. Some pharmacists pursue advanced studies, such as hospital pharmacy residencies or Doctor of Pharmacy degrees.

### How Do I Find Out More?

To find out more about what pharmacists do, talk to them! Spend some time with pharmacists in your community. Contact the pharmacy department of a local hospital or a university with a pharmacy program.

***Pharmacists are pleased to discuss their career and provide helpful advice.***