



CNA HealthPro

FAQs – Office Medications

Q. I keep some medications in the office to dispense to patients when needed. How can I best manage the risk of theft and other potential problems?

A. The dispensing of medications – whether antibiotics, NSAIDS, barbiturates or narcotics – requires proper protocols and controls. Here are a few guidelines to help you protect your patients and your practice.

- Review the patient's medical history prior to dispensing *any* medication. Document in the patient's chart your clinical rationale for prescribing, including patient complaints, examination results, and diagnoses.
- Maintain appropriate licensing for the drugs you prescribe.
- Maintain complete control over the dispensing of medication. Even if a patient simply wants two aspirin, members should not dispense them unless the dentist has reviewed the patient's medical history and given authorization. Document the dispensing in the patient's chart.
- Keep all drug inventories in a locked cabinet at all times. Access to drugs should be limited to the dentist and designated employees.
- Maintain a dispensing log for *all* over-the-counter and prescription medications. Keep the log in the locked cabinet with the medications.
- In the medication log, document the date, patient's name, drug dispensed, dosage, route of administration, prescription number or lot number, time of administration and person dispensing the medication.
- Take regularly inventory of your drug cabinet and reconcile stock on hand with both purchases and distribution to patients, as documented in your drug log.
- Perform regular quality assurance audits, comparing patient records to the medication log for thoroughness and accuracy of information. This process can help identify medication theft and deter potential theft.
- Require patients to have someone else drive them to and from the appointment whenever you prescribe a drug that could impair their ability to drive themselves. Document their acknowledgment in the patient record and ask them to sign the note as well.
- Educate all staff members about medications and disbursement policy, and update their knowledge on a regular basis.
- If you do discover a theft, contact your local police department and file a complaint. Obtain a copy of the police report.

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