



# Tips for Talking With Your Pharmacist



Pharmacists are a valuable resource for patients in many ways. Pharmacists are well-educated in both prescription and over-the-counter products and are able to help with any medication questions or concerns. Pharmacists work closely with your doctor to give you professional guidance about your health.

## Some terms that might come in handy when speaking with your pharmacist

### Generic drug

A drug that is identical to brand-name drugs in active ingredients, dosage, safety, strengths, quality, performance, and intended use. Inactive ingredients such as dyes and fillers can vary, so generic drugs may look different than their brand-name counterparts.

### Brand-name drug

A brand-name drug is a medicine that has been discovered, researched, tested, developed, and marketed by a pharmaceutical company. Once a new drug has been discovered, a patent is filed on it that prevents a rival company from creating a generic version for up to 20 years.

### Preferred drug

These are brand name drugs that are listed on the insurance plan's formulary drug list. You usually pay a lower coinsurance for these drugs. These drugs are usually cheaper because of price negotiations between your plan and the drug manufacturer.

### Non-preferred brand-name drug

These are brand-name drugs that are not included on the plan's formulary or list of preferred drugs. If you opt for non-preferred drugs, you will have higher costs when compared to generic or preferred brand-name medications.



## Some Tips to Help You Better Communicate With Your Pharmacy:

- When you get a new health insurance card in the mail, make sure to bring the new card the next time you go to the pharmacy to update your insurance information (This goes for your doctor's office, too).
- If your doctor sends your prescription to the pharmacy electronically, call the pharmacy to check if they have received it, determine what your co-pay will be, and when it will be ready for you to pick up before heading to the pharmacy. This will help to avoid delays and frustration.
- Keep a record of the medications you take and give it to your pharmacist. Include all prescription and over the counter products, including vitamins, herbs, and other supplements. Your pharmacist will use this to keep his/her records up-to-date and help you use medicine safely.
- Let your pharmacy know if you've had any allergic reactions or problems with medicines. These issues will be noted on your chart and will ensure that in the future you are not given medications that could harm you.
- Let your pharmacist know anything that could impact your use of the medicine, like if you have trouble swallowing pills, struggle to read labels, or can't remember to take your medications.

## There are many advantages of talking to your pharmacist

### Cost issue

If you have an issue with the price of the medication, your pharmacist may be able to suggest some options for cost savings, like store brand discount cards or co-payment assistance programs.

### Answering questions

If you don't understand the directions on how to take the medications, ask your pharmacist! They can help explain the instructions and give tips on how to stay organized, like setting a schedule or filling a pillbox. They can also inform you of any side effects you may experience from a new medication.

### Connection with your doctor

If there is an issue with your prescription, your pharmacist can get in touch with your doctor directly and let them know what needs to happen before they are able to fill it.

### Talking to you about medicine safety

Your pharmacist can give important advice on which over-the-counter medicines, such as pain medicines and dietary supplements, are safe to use in combination with your prescription medicines.

### Monitoring health problems

Your pharmacist can help you manage your conditions. For example, if you get your blood pressure checked at the pharmacy, you can share those numbers with your pharmacist. Your pharmacist can talk to you about your risk for high blood pressure, give suggestions on how to monitor it, or recommend seeking medical care.

### Helping you manage other health conditions

Pharmacists can give immunizations, like the annual flu shot and the shingles shot. They can also teach you how to use health equipment such as blood glucose monitors and inhalers if these are necessary for your care.