

Top Ten Tips

To Save Money on your Prescription Drugs

p.t.i.[®] managed care concepts

N.P.S.SM
PROCESSING

Prescription drugs provide a beneficial outcome to improve health. Prescription medications have helped to improve the quality of life for many people as well as turning many diseases into treatable conditions. However, all of these medical innovations come at a cost. The costs for prescription drug medications are rising. In fact, prescription drug costs have quadrupled since 1991 and are continuing to increase at about 25 percent a year. These costs affect everyone - whether you are currently taking a prescription drug or not. However, there are a few simple tips that you can follow to help save money on your prescription medications.

- 1. Ask your healthcare provider if there is anything that is over the counter, or not a prescription that will work for you.** Many medications available without a prescription are equally effective and cost up to 60 percent less than a prescription medication. Antihistamines, pain relievers, and antacids can often be purchased over the counter for less than your prescription drug copayment.
- 2. Ask your healthcare provider to review your formulary booklet to see if a generic or Preferred Medication is right for you.** You can also save money by simply being aware of the cost differences between different brand name drugs in the same category. Your formulary booklet groups drugs by categories. There are significant cost differences among antidepressants, cardiac drugs, antihistamines and many other drugs. While switching brands may not be an option for everyone, ask your doctor if your condition allows you to try a preferred brand name medication or a less expensive brand name drug.
- 3. Ask your healthcare provider if there is a generic alternative.** For many brand name drugs, there are generic alternatives available that can save you a substantial amount of money. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) requires that generic drugs provide the same effectiveness and safety as their brand name counterparts. If you are currently using prescription antihistamines, antibiotics, pain relievers, antacids or inhalers, there may be equally effective generic alternatives available. Ask your doctor if this is an option for you.
- 4. Ask your healthcare provider if they have samples of the medication that you can try first before filling a prescription.** Ask your physician for samples at every visit. They usually have plenty. This will allow you to save money on your copayments while determining if the medication will work for you. If your physician does not have samples available for the medication that you need, ask for a smaller quantity of medication. You can reduce medication waste by requesting a smaller quantity of pills for a new prescription you are beginning. This will allow time to determine if your body can tolerate the medicine. Paying for a month or more of medication only to find out it does not work for you can waste hundreds of dollars.
- 5. Ask your healthcare provider if you can split your medication.** In some instances, cutting higher dosage tablets in half can save as much as 50 percent of the cost of your prescription medication. Here is how it works. If your doctor normally prescribes 20 mg tablets that cost \$30 for 30 tablets, you can ask for the 40 mg tablets that also cost \$30, and then split the medication in half. That way you have doubled the amount of drug for the same cost. The medication you have split will last you twice as long, for half the price of the original strength you were taking. Unfortunately not all prescription medications can be split in half, ask your physician or pharmacist if the medication you are taking can be split in half for a cost savings.
- 6. Store your drugs away from heat and moisture to ensure there is no loss of potency.** Ask your physician or pharmacist what are the optimal storage conditions for your medications. Storing your medications in the correct environment can ensure that you receive the full effect from your medication every time you take it.
- 7. Utilize the mail-order service when you can.** If you have a mail order service program available with your prescription drug benefit program, check into it. In many cases, the mail order can save you money on copayments and allow you to obtain a larger quantity of medication for a lower cost. Mail order pharmacy services help to balance cost with convenience.
- 8. Make sure you are following your healthcare provider's instructions for taking your medications.** Prescription drugs are an investment in your health. When patients do not follow their doctor's instructions for taking prescriptions, the patient and the community pay for both the prescription and the illness or condition that could have been prevented. If you're having problems with side effects or cannot follow your doctor's orders for other reasons, let your doctor know.
- 9. Review all your prescriptions with your doctor at each visit.** You may be paying for some drugs you no longer need. Reviewing your medications at every visit is an opportunity for you to talk to your healthcare provider about medications that may have come out with a generic alternative since the last time you had an appointment, or it can also give you a chance to discuss anything you feel is unusual that may be occurring as a side effect of your medications.
- 10. Take your explanation of benefits report with you when you see your healthcare provider, so they understand the costs of the medications you are receiving.** This report is a summary of the prescription medications you or a member of your household has received. This report can be an excellent tool to discuss with your healthcare provider. The report lists the cost of the medications as well as alternatives to discuss with your healthcare provider.



By following these ten simple tips, you can make sure you are getting the best value on all your prescription medications.

Pharmaceutical Technologies, Inc.[®]
1-800-546-5677

Preserving Benefits for the Workers of America's CorporationsSM
14301 First National Bank Parkway, Suite 200 • Omaha, NE 68154 • www.pti-nps.com
© Copyrighted by Pharmaceutical Technologies, Inc.® 2002-2003. Illegal to reproduce.