

Free & Low-Cost Prescription Drugs

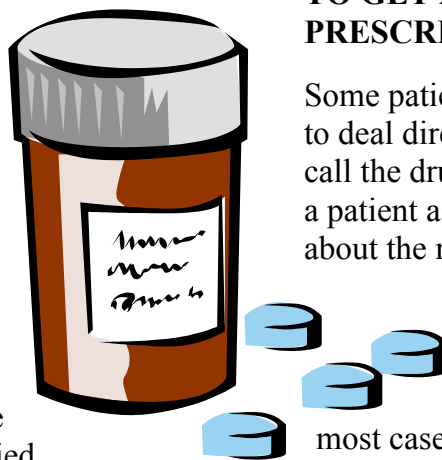
Between 2000 and 2007, 44 to 54 million Americans did not have healthcare insurance. Others, including many elderly citizens, have healthcare insurance but cannot afford potentially lifesaving drugs because of the high cost, even with Medicare Prescription Drugs, Part D. It is very important for low-income adults under the age of 65 to take advantage of free and low-cost prescription drug programs.

Many drug companies provide patient assistance programs. These programs offer many prescription drugs free of charge to low-incomes and other qualified groups.

Frequently used names for patient assistance programs are:

- Reimbursement programs
- Indigent patient programs
- Compassionate care programs
- Medical needs programs

Surprisingly, only a small number of people who could potentially benefit from these free programs are using them or even know about them. The National Council on Aging provides a Web site to check your eligibility for these programs:



<http://www.ncoa.org/content.cfm?sectionid=352>.
By answering a few questions, you can see if you qualify for any patient assistance programs.

TO GET ASSISTANCE WITH YOUR PRESCRIPTIONS

Some patient assistance programs require you to deal directly with the manufacturer. Simply call the drug manufacturer and ask if they have a patient assistance program. If they do, ask about the requirements.

Most companies require that you have limited income and no prescription drug coverage. In most cases, you can complete the patient section of the application, but your doctor will need to help you complete the physician portion of the application allowing you to participate.

Because of the current recession, drug companies such as Pfizer are offering new programs for those who have recently become unemployed. (For more details on Pfizer's program, call (866) 706-2400.) If you use prescription drugs from other companies, you might want to check with those companies to find out if they offer similar programs for the unemployed. Your pharmacy can give you numbers to call for other drug companies.

You can make this part of the process easier by preparing your part of the form ahead of time and having the necessary financial information ready to attach to the completed form. If your

doctor does not have time to call or will not participate, contact your local health department or local hospital for assistance.



The Kentucky Physicians Care Program is also available to assist those who cannot afford prescription drugs. According to the Kentucky Attorney General's Office, KPC has arrangements with some drug manufacturers to provide certain drugs at no cost to those who are eligible. You may contact your local Department of Community Based Services for more information about this program. Also, the KPC phone number is (800) 633-8100, and the Health Kentucky Web site is: <http://www.healthkentucky.org>. (Click on the Directory link to locate pharmaceutical assistance resources.)

One organization the Kentucky Attorney General recommends is the Partnership for Prescription Assistance. Their interactive Web page will help you find a patient assistance program to meet your needs. If you want more information on PPA's patient assistance programs please visit: <https://www.pparx.org/>. Those who lack Internet access can use a computer at their local public library to visit PPA's Web site. Also, PPA's phone number is (888) 477-2669. This is a toll-free call.

For assistance with prescription drugs, another helpful Web site is RxAssist, a patient assistance program center, at www.rxassist.org. As with the PPA site, you can download and print the necessary forms and information for the free drug programs.

The United States government also has a Web site for patient assistance programs for individuals who receive Medicare. You can contact the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services at (800) 633-4227. The Web site is: <http://www.medicare.gov/pdphome.asp>.

HOW WILL YOU RECEIVE YOUR MEDICINE?

You need to find out how you will receive the prescription drugs, and how to get refills. Most companies send medications directly to your doctor. However, a few companies send the medication directly to the patient's home. Some patients

have experienced delays in receiving the drugs, so find out the company's shipping schedule and what you or your doctor should do if there is a problem.

OTHER COST SAVERS

Ask your doctor if he or she has samples of the drugs that you have been prescribed, especially when your doctor is prescribing a new medication. Many pharmaceutical companies send free samples on a regular basis for doctors to give to their patients.

For prescriptions taken regularly, it is many times cheaper to buy a 90-day supply instead of only 30 days.

Check with your pharmacist whether double the dose (in pill form) would cost you less money. If so, ask your doctor if you can double your dose and use a pill splitter.

Also check the cost of buying prescriptions by mail, since mail order may cost less.

Another way to save money is to use discount cards. A program now being offered in Kentucky, KentuckyRxCard, provides a free discount card at www.kentuckyrxcard.com; contact your local pharmacy to see if they offer discounts through this program. You could also look for other discount card offers on the Internet.

Many pharmacies also offer \$4.00 prescription refills on generics.

PRESCRIPTIONS FROM CANADA

Many U.S. consumers are getting prescription drugs from Canada. As part of the Homeland Security Act of 2006, an



amendment was added that now prevents U.S. Customs officials from confiscating up-to 90-day supplies of prescription medications from Canada, although it technically remains illegal for Americans to buy prescription drugs from Canada. Certain addictive drugs are still not allowed to be shipped into the country. The amendment applies only to prescription medications sent through the postal service or similar commercial shipping services, and only to medications sent from Canada.

If you decide to get prescription drugs from Canada, make sure you order from an approved Canadian pharmacy, as U.S. Customs estimates that at least 10 percent of shipments that appear to be from Canadian Internet pharmacies contain counterfeit medications, which could be harmful or ineffective. To make sure you're buying from an accredited Canadian pharmacy, look for the Canadian International Pharmacy Association (CIPA) seal on their Web site. Other organizations to check with are the Internet and Mail-Order Pharmacy Accreditation Commission (IMPAC) and PharmacyChecker.com.

Also, we strongly recommend that you do not break the law by ordering drugs illegally.

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