

Managing Your Prescriptions—Q&A

Making sure you have all of your medications at the right time can be difficult—and it's a responsibility that you share with your doctor or nurse. Here are some answers to questions we often hear from patients. We hope this helps make our prescribing system more clear.

I am getting low on a medication I have taken for years. Why is it so hard to get a refill by phone?

Even long term medications need to be monitored by your doctor or nurse. When we write a prescription, we try and give you the amount of medication that can be safely given before your next review. For example, people on thyroid medication need a blood test about once per year – so we will ask the pharmacy to refill this for a year, then we need to have a clinic visit again. For others, especially those on blood pressure medication or pills for diabetes, the reviews may need to occur more often, like every three months. If you are taking medication for a new condition, we may even ask to see you sooner. **When you are running out of pills, that is usually a sign that you need a clinic visit to review your overall health and prescriptions.**

My doctor said she was giving me my pills for 6 months. When I look at my bottle, it says there are no refills at the pharmacy. Now what do I do?

Ask your pharmacy to double check your record to see if there are refills. Sometimes the pharmacy forgets to record refills.

I saw a specialist once and they gave me a new pill. Now I am running out – but the specialist doesn't want to see me again. How do I get more?

In most cases, your family doctor has received a note from the specialist – and can check to see about your new prescription. We prefer to maintain an updated list of ALL your prescriptions. Please bring in ALL your pills at each visit so we can check to make sure everything is up to date. Often, we can continue to prescribe any medications that you continue to need. But we need to see you in person to discuss this.

I feel I am taking too many pills. What do I do?

Talk to your doctor or nurse. We may be able to reduce the number of medications you take. We also have a team pharmacist who works with us to ensure patients are on the best medications possible. The pharmacist can do a review of your medications and make suggestions to you and your care provider about any changes.

It's Friday and I have run out of my pain pills. What next?

Pain pills are often in a class of restricted drugs that require extra documentation and monitoring. The people who run the on call clinic on the weekends are not required to renew these kinds of restricted drugs. It is your job to make sure you see your regular care provider in enough time so that you don't run out of meds.

I still think my doctor brings me in for medication renewals because they want to earn extra money.

We don't make money on these visits. Most of our patients have signed up to our Family Health Team, and for them we are paid a fixed amount every year, not for each visit. We genuinely want to make sure you are getting medications that are safe and effective. If you want longer times between reviews, please discuss this with your doctor or nurse.

Tips for Making Prescriptions Easier

- **Ask your doctor or nurse for the longest prescription possible**
- **Double check that the prescription has the number of refills you are expecting**
- **Call for an appointment at least 2 weeks before you run out of pills, to review your health and side effects before the next prescription**
- **Bring your medication bottles with you on every visit**

Preventing Disease Before it Happens

Here are the things we want you to come to the clinic for on a regular basis. Please call us if you are due for any of these procedures.

You might even consider having these done on your birthday!

For Everyone Over 20

- Review and update your immunizations every 2 years
- Everyone is eligible for a flu shot every year, around October, but we **STRONGLY ENCOURAGE** the flu shot for those over age 65
- A blood sugar test for diabetes and cholesterol test for heart disease should be done every 2-3 years over the age of 40.
- A stool test or a scope test of the colon (for colon cancer) if you are over age 50

For Women

- A PAP test (for cervical cancer) every year, unless your health care provider has told you it can be less frequent
- A Mammogram (for breast cancer) every 2 years, if you are over age 50

For Men

- An examination of the prostate gland (to be determined in discussion with your health care provider) if you are over age 50