

Getting Your Specialty Medication From a Specialty Pharmacy

Know the Facts

Your doctor may prescribe you a specialty medication for your medical condition that you may need to get from a specialty pharmacy. To walk you through the process, here is some helpful information to let you know what you can expect.

What are specialty medications?

Specialty medications are complex therapies that treat serious and chronic medical conditions, such as cancer, multiple sclerosis, rheumatoid arthritis, acromegaly, Crohn's disease, and others. These medications may require:

- Special handling and storage (for example, refrigeration or temperature control)
- Clinical support and regular follow-ups to make sure that you are taking your medication correctly
- Individual counseling and education by phone (for example, side effect management, dosing instructions, or symptom control)

Generally, specialty medications are prescribed by specialists (such as oncologists, hematologists, or endocrinologists) and, depending on the drug, may come in the form of injections, infusions, or oral therapies.

What are specialty pharmacies?

Specialty pharmacies provide you or your doctor with the specialty medications that you are prescribed. In addition to the specialty medication, specialty pharmacies may offer a range of support services throughout the course of your therapy. Below are examples of several of the services that specialty pharmacies may provide to you at no additional cost:

Reimbursement Support	Support with verifying your insurance benefits and how to pay for your medications, including discussing any options to help minimize your out-of-pocket costs
Convenient Delivery	Safe, convenient, and confidential delivery of your specialty medication to your home, your doctor's office, or any other location of your choice, and at a time that best fits your schedule
Supplies	Free standard supplies for injectable medications that you or a caregiver would use, such as syringes, adhesive bandages, sharps containers (for disposing used needles), and alcohol swabs
Special Storage and Handling	Special handling and insulated packaging to ensure quality storage
Medication Information	Medication information about the specialty medication prescribed to you, including personalized instructions on how to take your medication
Counseling and Education	Nurses and pharmacists can help you learn more about your disease and treatment and provide you with educational materials and tools
24/7 Clinical Support	Nurses and pharmacists are available to answer your questions 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
Refill Reminders	Proactive refill reminders through automated phone calls or computed-based programs
Coordination of Care Support	Ongoing communication with your doctor to make sure that you are on track with your therapy

Why do I have to get my specialty medications through a specialty pharmacy?



Drug manufacturers and insurance companies recognize that patients who have complex medical conditions and take specialty medications may need additional services and support that traditional retail and mail-order pharmacies do not offer, so they work with you and a specialty pharmacy to provide you with more access to resources.

Depending on your specific insurance company, you may be required to receive your specialty medication through a specialty pharmacy. Sometimes, your specialty medication may only be available from a specialty pharmacy. Your doctor's office will be able to help you review your options.

How does a specialty pharmacy work with my doctor?



Your doctor will always be your primary health care provider, but your specialty pharmacy will also become part of your overall care team and can help answer questions you may have about your therapy or provide other support, as needed.

How do I get my medications through a specialty pharmacy?

Visiting the Doctor



Step 1

Visit your doctor, discuss your symptoms, and complete any follow-up tests as needed



Step 2

Your doctor may then discuss your diagnosis with you (most likely on a separate visit) and if needed, may prescribe a specialty medication



Step 3

Your doctor's office staff (such as a reimbursement specialist, office manager, or physician assistant) may talk about your options and how you can receive your specialty medication

Using a Specialty Pharmacy



Step 4

Your doctor's office staff will help you determine and navigate through the appropriate way in which to obtain your specialty medication

Starting Therapy



Step 5

After you receive your specialty medication, your doctor's office and specialty pharmacy may both contact you to see how you are feeling and discuss any barriers you might have to taking your therapy as prescribed. For example, they may call to ask you to discuss treatment goals, side effect management, any missed doses, or if you receive your drug shipments regularly, as well as answer any questions regarding your disease or treatment.

IMPORTANT NOTE: When your specialty pharmacy calls you, it is possible that you may not recognize the caller ID, as many of them use toll-free numbers. You may want to take note of your specialty pharmacy's caller ID number so you know that when they call you, you can pick up.

What do I need to do next?



Talk to your doctor to determine how best to obtain your specialty medication. Your individual insurance company may dictate from which specialty pharmacy you can obtain your specialty medications.

What does this cost me?



Your insurance company will determine your available coverage and you will be responsible for paying a portion of your medication's costs (through your insurance plan's deductible or coinsurance/co-payment). In general, you do not have to pay any additional fees to the specialty pharmacy for the services it offers related to your therapy, since it is part of your insurance plan.