



Tuesday, January 27, 2004

Mail-order prescriptions can save time and money

By *Flori Meeks*, contributing writer

Increasing numbers of health-care consumers are turning to mail-order prescriptions to save time and money.

The interest has been intense in recent years. Mail-order sales of prescription drugs nearly doubled between 1999 and 2001, a study by the National Institute for Health Care Management estimates. Most of the consumers who opt for this service have chronic health conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure or heart disease. Short-term medications such as antibiotics and medications that require storage at specific temperatures should be purchased at a local pharmacy.

In most cases, a prescription is sent to the mail-order pharmacy or phoned in by the physician. The patients receive three to six months of medicine at a time, but they only make one co-payment. Depending on the program, the payment usually is less than what consumers would pay for individual purchases over an extended time period.

Some plans offer additional discounts for generic or bulk purchases.

Mail-order prescriptions also spare consumers the inconvenience of making multiple trips to their local pharmacy. Most services deliver to homes or offices in plain, tamper-evident packaging.

To request refills, a number of services allow patients to use mail, e-mail, Internet or phone service. Most plans encourage patients to order medicine two to three weeks before they will need them to save on rush delivery charges and to avoid possible problems if a shipment is delayed.

A number of plans also offer access to a pharmacist who can answer questions or concerns about medication.

To get the most out of the mail-order approach, ask your health-care provider to write mail-order prescriptions for the maximum quantity your plan allows.

This is the eleventh article in a series on health-related issues. By being an informed health-care consumer, OU employees can help contain and reduce benefit costs to the university.

SUMMARY

Increasing numbers of health-care consumers are turning to mail-order prescriptions to save time and money. In most cases, a prescription is sent to the mail-order pharmacy or phoned in by the physician. The patients receive three to six months of medicine at a time, but they only make one co-payment. Depending on the program, the payment usually is less than what consumers would pay for individual purchases over an extended time period.

Created by CareTech Administrator (webservices@caretechsolutions.com) on Tuesday, January 27, 2004
Modified by CareTech Administrator (webservices@caretechsolutions.com) on Tuesday, January 27, 2004
Article Start Date: Tuesday, January 27, 2004