

# PRESCRIPTION DRUGS, — Explained

You're at the pharmacy to fill a prescription. Your pharmacist is unable to provide a generic drug because your doctor marked the script "Dispense as Written". Do you know what this means? How about the difference between a preferred and non-preferred drug? Familiarizing yourself with these common terms could save you a little time and money.



**Prescription Medications** – Medications prescribed to you by a doctor. Cost of these medications is determined by their assigned tier: generic, preferred, non-preferred or specialty

- **Generic Drugs** – Drugs approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to be chemically identical to corresponding preferred or non-preferred versions. Usually the most cost-effective version of any medication.
- **Preferred Drugs** – Brand-name drugs on your provider's approved list (available online).
- **Preventive Drugs** – Certain medications may be available to you at \$0 cost share or before satisfying your deductible if your plan has a Preventive Drug List. Drugs on this list will vary from plan to plan, so this may not apply to you.
- **Non-Preferred Drugs** – Brand-name drugs not on your provider's list of approved drugs. These drugs are typically newer and have higher copayments.

- **Specialty Drugs** – Prescription medications used to treat complex, chronic and often costly conditions such as multiple sclerosis, rheumatoid arthritis, hepatitis C and hemophilia. Because of the high cost, many insurers require that specific criteria be met before a drug is covered. These medications are usually required to be filled at a specific pharmacy.

**Dispense as Written (DAW)** – While many states mandate that pharmacists deliver a generic version whenever available to reduce medical costs, Dispense as Written overrides the mandate, requiring that the prescription be filled with the specific name-brand drug that the doctor is prescribing. Ask your doctor about more affordable, equally effective medications.

**Home Infusion** – A drug that is administered intravenously, or through other non-oral routes, such as intramuscular injections and epidural routes (into the membranes surrounding the spinal cord). Diseases commonly requiring infusion therapy include infections that are unresponsive to oral antibiotics, cancer, dehydration, hemophilia, and multiple sclerosis. Infusible medications may also be filled in the doctor's office, outpatient hospital setting or clinic. These medications typically fall under the specialty drug category.

**Over-the-Counter (OTC) Medications** – Medications available without a prescription. You may be able to purchase OTC medications with funds from a Health Savings Account or Flexible Spending Account.

**Prior Authorization** – A requirement that your physician obtain approval from your health insurance plan to prescribe a specific medication for you.

**Step Therapy** – The goal of a Step Therapy Program is to guide patients to less expensive, yet equally effective, medications. You must typically try a generic or preferred-brand medication before “stepping up” to a non-preferred brand.

# EXPENSIVE MEDICATIONS?

Apps and prescription discount programs such as **GoodRx, Amazon Prime RX Savings, and Optum Perks** let you compare prices of prescription drugs and find possible discounts.

How do they work? These discounts can't be combined with your benefit plan's coverage, so make sure to check the price against the cost of using your insurance's prescription drug benefit. Something else to consider: If you choose to use a discount card and are therefore not tapping into your insurance's prescription drug benefit, the cash amount you pay for the prescription may not count toward your deductible or out-of-pocket maximum under the benefit plan.

**GoodRX** is a web- and app-based platform that allows you to search for prescription drug coupons and compare pharmacy prices. The company claims a savings of up to 80% on generics. **Optum Perks** also provides coupons for medications and a searchable database for drug cost comparison at participating pharmacies near you. The Optum Perks member card, which can be used at more than 64,000 pharmacies, is free to use and requires no personal data. Another discount option is the **Amazon Prime RX Savings** discount card, which is included with an Amazon Prime membership and is administered by InsideRX. It provides discounts of up to 80% for generics and up to 40% for brand-name medication at participating pharmacies.