

Comparison Shopping: Getting the Best Price on Your Drugs

Prescription drugs can be expensive.

Even if you have health insurance that covers drugs, your drugs can cost a lot. And if you do not have drug coverage, you may pay very high prices for your drugs.

High prices can keep people from buying the drugs they need. But there are things you can do to save money on drugs—and sometimes a lot of money. To learn more, visit our free website, www.ConsumerReportsHealth.org/BestBuyDrugs.

Our advice:

Here is our advice to help you get the best prices on your drugs.

Talk to your doctors and pharmacists.

Tell your doctors and pharmacists that the cost of your drugs is important to you. Ask your doctor to prescribe generic drugs if possible. Tell the pharmacist that you want generics. Generics usually cost much less than brand-name drugs.

Compare drug prices.

Drug prices vary. In general, you can save on generics—and sometimes on brand-name drugs—by shopping around locally or online.

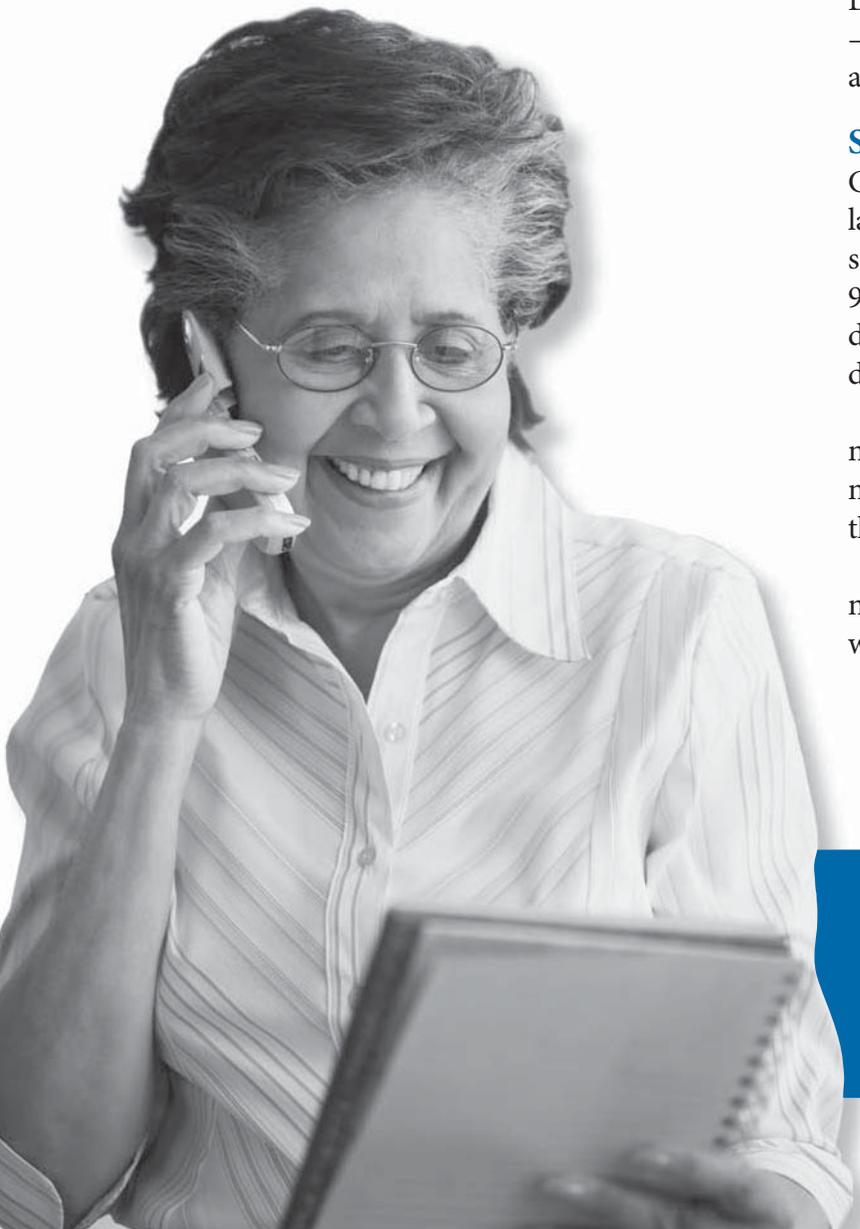
Shop around locally.

Call or visit at least 3 pharmacies. Include at least one large discount store. Wal-Mart and Target sell a 30-day supply of many generic drugs for about \$4.00 and a 90-day supply for about \$10.00 each. Also ask about discount cards. They can save you 10% to 25% of drug costs.

Tell each pharmacist the names of the drugs you need. Ask how much they cost. Explain that you do not have drug coverage and that you will be paying for the drugs yourself.

If the store with the lowest price is far away, ask a store near you to match the lower price. Smaller pharmacies will often do this if you live in the neighborhood.

Many pharmacies, both large and small, offer drug discount programs. Ask if your drug is offered in one of these programs.



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Shop online.

Shopping on the Web is one of the best, and fastest, ways to compare drug prices and save money. Online pharmacies sell drugs for 35% or more off the regular price.

Online shopping is especially convenient if you buy a drug regularly for a chronic condition, like high blood pressure or high cholesterol.

You, or your doctor, can fax or mail your prescription to the online pharmacy. The drugs will be mailed to you or to a local store where you can pick them up.

Be careful. Use only U.S. websites that have the "VIPPS" seal. VIPPS stands for Verified Internet Pharmacy Practice Site. And never buy drugs from websites that send you spam e-mail.

Some well-known VIPPS pharmacy sites are:

www.drugstore.com

www.familymeds.com

www.walgreens.com

www.cvs.com

www.costco.com

More ways to save money on drugs if you have a low income:

Patient assistance programs: These programs can help people with low incomes get brand-name drugs. Most major drug companies have these programs. Applying can take time, but the drugs are usually free if you do not have drug coverage.

These websites can help you find programs:

- www.rxassist.org
- www.pparx.org (1-888-477-2669)
- www.benefitscheckuprx.org
- www.needymeds.org
- www.medicare.gov (1-800-MEDICARE)

State drug discount cards: Some state governments offer drug discount cards. You have to meet age and income limits. Some programs have a website that compares drug prices at different drugstores. For a list of program phone numbers and websites, go to: www.rxassist.org/patients/res-state-programs.cfm.

Medicare low-income subsidy: This national program helps people with Medicare pay for prescription drugs. This is also called the Extra Help program. To learn more, call 1-800-MEDICARE. Or visit: www.medicare.gov.

