

How to Afford Medications

Medications are often necessary, but can be very expensive. Here are some hints and resources to help you meet your needs.

1. *Medications vary widely in price*, even among the comparable newer medicines. If you are concerned about the price of the medicine that has been prescribed for you, talk to your doctor and pharmacist about whether there are equivalent medicines that may work as well but be less expensive.
2. Shop around for price. Different *pharmacies charge different prices* for the same medicine.
3. Look into *pharmaceutical assistance programs*. Most medicines have a pharmaceutical assistance program which will provide free medicine for people who are unable to pay for them. This is true for psychiatric as well as most other medicines. Good resources to find out about pharmaceutical assistance programs for specific medicines are <http://www.needymeds.com> , <http://www.rxassist.org>; <http://www.helpingpatients.org>, and <http://www.healthyoregon.org>. The MedAssist program in Salem helps people in the Salem area apply for and keep track of pharmaceutical assistance applications. MedAssist can be reached at 503-561-6043.
4. Your physician may have *samples or coupons* he/she can give you temporarily while you're applying for pharmaceutical assistance programs.
5. Local organizations such as your local mental health center, Northwest Human Services Helpline in Salem (503-581-5535) or your local community action agency (<http://www.cado-oregon.org/members.htm>) may offer *short-term financial assistance* for medicines. Sometimes it is helpful to apply at the beginning of the month before the money runs out.
6. There are also *discount programs* which you can join. If you are on Medicare, visit <http://www.medicare.gov> for information about Medicare discount programs.
7. If you have a co-payment on medicines, you may be able to save money by *ordering several months' supply* at a time. Ordering by mail may also be less expensive if your plan offers that option.
8. Different dosages may cost different amounts; often the cost is based on the number of pills, not the dosage. Some people purchase a higher

dosage and split the pill in half using a *pill splitter*. Talk to your doctor if you are considering this option.

9. There are sometimes *generic medicines* equivalent to the one you are paying for, which may be much less expensive. Although generic medicines are considered equivalent to brand name, there are times when people find one medicine or the other seems to work better. Consult with your doctor and pharmacist.
10. Another excellent site for comparing medicines and identifying ways to reduce costs is sponsored by the *Office for Oregon Health Policy and Research* at <http://www.OregonRx.org>.