

Pharmacy Benefit Dimensions®

An Independent Health  company

PHARMACY BENEFITS NEWSLETTER • VOLUME 10, ISSUE 2

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Practice proper drug disposal at home

Many consumers keep unused medications in their possession because they do not want the drugs to go to waste or do not know how to dispose of them properly. Unfortunately, unused medications in the household are contributing to growing rates of prescription drug abuse among Americans, particularly teenagers. According to the Center for Disease Control, prescription drug abuse is the fastest growing problem among youth between 13 and 17 years old.

Do you currently have old and expired medications in your home? If so, you may want to take advantage of community drug take-back programs that allow you to bring unused drugs to a central location for proper disposal. To find a drug take-back event by region, visit the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation website at www.dec.ny.gov.

If no take-back program is available in your area, throw the drugs in the household trash following these steps:

- Remove them from their original containers and mix them with an undesirable substance, such as used coffee grounds or kitty litter (this makes the

drug less appealing to children and pets, and unrecognizable to people who may intentionally go through the trash seeking drugs).

- Place the mixture in a sealable bag, empty can or other container to prevent the drug from leaking or breaking out of a garbage bag.
- Before throwing out a medicine container, scratch out all identifying information on the prescription label to make it unreadable. This will help protect your identity and the privacy of your personal health information.

It is important that you do not give your medicine to friends. Doctors prescribe medicines based on a person's specific symptoms and medical history. A medicine that works for you could be dangerous for someone else. Also, you shouldn't flush expired or unwanted prescription drugs down the toilet or drain unless the label or accompanying patient information specifically instructs you to do so. When a medication is flushed down the toilet or sink, its chemicals can pass through treatment plants or septic systems and end up in nearby rivers or lakes, thus posing a danger to the environment.

Please direct questions or comments you have about the Pharmacy Benefit Dimensions newsletter to:

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Pharmacy Benefit Dimensions

Our help desk continues to provide excellent service

Independent Health's Pharmacy Benefit Dimensions has a help desk dedicated to pharmacy customer service on-site. Our help desk strives to ensure that services for participating pharmacies are both effective and efficient.

We continuously monitor our call volume, and in 2013, our pharmacy help desk took close to 160,000 calls. Each year we survey our participating pharmacies on several topics pertaining to our pharmacy help desk. Here are the results from our 2013 survey:

- 91 percent rated the pharmacy help desk overall as "excellent" or "very good."
- 100 percent of pharmacies reported their issues were resolved the first time they called the pharmacy help desk.
- 93 percent rated the pharmacy assistants with regard to courtesy as "excellent" or "very good."

- 91 percent rated the pharmacy assistants with regard to consistency of information as "excellent" or "very good."

Remember, our pharmacy help desk is here to help resolve any issues you may have while at the pharmacy. The normal hours of operation are Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 11 p.m. (ET) and on Saturday and Sunday from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. (ET). If your pharmacist is having trouble billing a claim after hours, he or she can reach us by calling our 24-Hour Medical Help Line at (716) 631-8701 or 1-800-504-3439, and pressing 2.

As always, if you have any pharmacy-related questions, please call our Pharmacy Benefit Dimensions Member Services Department at (716) 635-7880 or 1-888-878-9172, Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Generic drugs are a safe, cost-effective option

There are many generic medications currently available that can help prevent or lessen the risks for chronic conditions such as heart disease, hypertension and asthma. These drugs are safe and effective alternatives to brand-name drugs. In fact, they're identical to their brand-name counterparts in terms of active ingredients, dosage and quality.

Generics do differ in one big way, however: cost. They typically are less expensive than brand-name drugs, and the savings can be significant. Going generic could save you between 30 and 80 percent.

Why do brand name medications cost more?

Brand-name medications are generally awarded patent protection for 20 years from the time they are discovered. By the time they are ready to be marketed and are approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), they often have 10 or more years of patent protection left. When the patent expires, other drug companies can introduce competitive generic versions, but only after they have been thoroughly tested and approved by the FDA.

The basic requirements for FDA approval of generic and brand-name drugs are the same. Generic manufacturers usually do not have to complete the expensive clinical trial process to prove that the active medication is effective. Instead, they are allowed to refer to the brand name medication's clinical trial data which has been building during the 20-year patent protection. This allows generic manufacturers to offer less expensive medications.

New generic medications in the marketplace

Here are some generic medications that have been recently released or are scheduled to be available before the end of the year:

Brand Name	Disease Category	Estimated Availability
Exalgo	Pain	Now available
Copaxone	Multiple Sclerosis	Third Quarter of 2014
Nexium	Gastrointestinal	Third Quarter of 2014
Boniva	Women's Health	Third Quarter of 2014
Renagel	Vitamins/Minerals	Third Quarter of 2014
Renvela	Vitamins/Minerals	Third Quarter of 2014
Exforge	Cardiovascular	Third Quarter of 2014
Celebrex	Pain	Fourth Quarter of 2014
Intuniv	Other CNS/Autonomic (Nervous system)	Fourth Quarter of 2014

Please note: Not all drugs are covered by all pharmacy benefit plans. Copayments, Tier placement and certain restrictions vary by plan.

If you have any questions about generic medications, please speak to your doctor or pharmacist.

Stay safe in the sun this summer

Summer means more time outdoors, and more time exposed to the sun's harmful rays. Everyone, regardless of skin color, can be damaged by UV light and should protect their skin whenever they plan to spend time outdoors. Not only is it important to use sunscreen, remember to choose a broad spectrum sunscreen with a minimum SPF of 15. The choice of broad spectrum will protect against both UVB rays (which contribute to sunburn) and UVA rays (which contribute to skin damage and cancer.)

In addition, here are some other important tips to keep in mind:

- Use enough sunscreen. Most people only apply 25 to 50 percent of what they should. When covering all exposed areas, use about a shotglass-full of lotion.

- Apply sunscreen 30 minutes before going outside and reapply at least every 2 hours. Even if your sunscreen is labeled water resistant, it should be reapplied after exposure to water or excessive sweating.
- If bug repellent is needed, put the sunscreen on first so it can bind to the skin.

Concerned about getting enough Vitamin D? Vitamin D levels aren't a reason to avoid sunscreen. While sunscreens do limit the amount of vitamin D the body produces, it's usually not nearly enough to cause deficiency.

**We're here
to help**

Independent Health's Pharmacy Benefit Dimensions has a special unit dedicated to servicing our PBM members. If you have any questions regarding any of your pharmacy benefit claims, please contact our Member Services Department at (716) 635-7880 or 1-888-878-9172, Monday through Friday from 8 am to 8 pm E.S.T.