

# How to Find Affordable Medicines

Finding less expensive medicines can be difficult. Even if you have health insurance, the prices and copays may still be too high. This can lead some people to look for other options. Sometimes these other options can be risky.

## 1. How can I use medicine safely?

It's against the law for local markets, *botanicas*, swap meets, and street vendors to sell prescription drugs. The drugs these vendors sell may be fake. They may not work or could make you sick. Also, taking prescription medicine that hasn't been prescribed for you can be harmful.

Remember the tips below for safe medicine use:

- Use prescription medicine prescribed for you by a licensed doctor
- Get prescription medicines only from a licensed pharmacist.
- Know how to take your medicines correctly. Ask your doctor or pharmacist, if you have questions.

## 2. How can I find safe, affordable medicines?

- **Ask your pharmacist or doctor if there are cheaper alternatives.** A generic drug has the same active ingredient as the brand name drug. Often it also costs less. Ask if there are any other drugs that might be cheaper but just as effective.
- **Ask about patient-assistance programs.** These programs are sponsored by companies that make prescription medicines. You may be able to get medicine for free or at a lower cost.
- **Shop around.** Some pharmacies sell generic medicines at discounted prices, and some may be willing to match prices.
- **Consider mail order.** If you have insurance and take medicines regularly, ask if your insurance company offers a mail-order pharmacy. Mail orders may have lower copays.
- **Find a health care program.** If you don't have health insurance call **2-1-1** or visit the [211 webpage](#). Hotline staff can help you find free or low-cost insurance and health care that covers medicines. **If you are undocumented and don't think you can get or afford health care, find out about [My Health LA](#)**, a free insurance program for individuals and families who cannot get health insurance.
- **Use online pharmacies with caution.** There are a lot of illegal online pharmacies that sell fake medicines. To find a safe and legal pharmacy, make sure the website address ends in *pharmacy*. To learn more visit [www.safe.pharmacy](http://www.safe.pharmacy)
- **Buy prescription medicines only from licensed pharmacists.** To check a license, call the CA State Board of Pharmacy 1-916-574-7900 or visit [www.pharmacy.ca.gov/consumers/protect\\_enforce.shtml](http://www.pharmacy.ca.gov/consumers/protect_enforce.shtml).



### Key Points

- Get prescription medicine only from a licensed pharmacist
- Ask for generic drugs
- If ordering medicine online, check to make sure the pharmacy is legal

### For More Information

#### Health Care Consumer Protection

[Publichealth.lacounty.gov/hccp](http://Publichealth.lacounty.gov/hccp)

#### Crime Stoppers

Call to report fake medicine 1-800-222-8477

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