

# FTC Consumer Alert

Federal Trade Commission ■ Bureau of Consumer Protection ■ Office of Consumer and Business Education

## No Need to *Pay* for Information on *Free (or Low-Cost) Rx Drugs*

Have you gotten spam email claiming that free or low-cost prescription drugs “are just a phone call away”? Have you visited a website offering to help you get free prescription drugs — for a fee? If so, you may be looking at a scam.

Some marketers are using spam email and the Web to offer information on free or low-cost prescription drug programs for a fee, sometimes as much as \$195. Federal officials encourage you to steer clear of any company that charges for information on free or low-cost prescription drug programs.

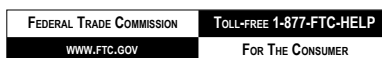
While it’s true that many prescription drug companies offer free or low-cost drugs for people who don’t have prescription drug coverage, can’t afford to pay for medication out of pocket, or have exhausted their insurance’s annual allowance, the programs have strict qualification standards. Factors that affect whether you qualify may include your income and the cost of the drugs you need.

If you’re trying to get free or low-cost prescription drugs, you don’t have to pay for information on how to do it. You just have to know where to look. The information is free — and publicly available — from physicians, pharmacists, and a new “one stop” website sponsored by a drug company trade group. The website address is [www.helpingpatients.org](http://www.helpingpatients.org).

The site provides information on patient assistance programs for consumers who don’t have prescription drug coverage. Industry and government patient assistance programs offer an estimated 1,000 medicines to treat a variety of diseases and conditions, including cancer, high cholesterol, diabetes, high blood pressure, stroke, depression, schizophrenia, and Alzheimer’s.

You can apply for free or low-cost prescription programs or medicines on the website, or you can ask your health care provider to do it for you. A computer program determines whether there might be a match for you among the various programs. Health care providers must approve most applications for these assistance programs.

The FTC works for the consumer to prevent fraudulent, deceptive, and unfair business practices in the marketplace and to provide information to help consumers spot, stop, and avoid them. To file a complaint or to get free information on consumer issues, visit [www.ftc.gov](http://www.ftc.gov) or call toll-free, 1-877-FTC-HELP (1-877-382-4357); TTY: 1-866-653-4261. The FTC enters Internet, telemarketing, identity theft, and other fraud-related complaints into Consumer Sentinel, a secure, online database available to hundreds of civil and criminal law enforcement agencies in the U.S. and abroad.



October 2004