



CENTERS FOR MEDICARE & MEDICAID SERVICES



More Time to Fill the Prescriptions You Need

Medicare and your drug plan are working together to make sure you have coverage for the prescriptions you need.

All Medicare drug plans must make sure that the people in their plan can get medically-necessary drugs to treat their conditions. Medicare drug plans cover both generic and brand-name prescription drugs. The drug lists must include a range of drugs in the prescribed categories and classes. This makes sure that people with different medical conditions can get the treatment they need.

Most plans have a list of drugs covered by the plan called a formulary. Your plan may have a different brand-name drug for your condition on its list than the prescription you currently take. You can work with your doctor to change to this drug or to a generic drug if one is on the list. If your doctor thinks you need a drug that isn't on the list, your doctor can apply for an exception to try to continue your current prescription. If the plan denies the request, you can appeal their decision.

When your Medicare prescription drug coverage starts and you go to the pharmacy for the first time to fill a prescription, you may not have had time to work with your doctor. You may still be taking a prescription that isn't covered by your Medicare drug plan, or a prescription that requires a prior authorization by your doctor before your Medicare drug plan would cover it.

So that you are able to leave the pharmacy with a prescription, your plan will cover a 30-day supply of your current prescription. You need to contact your doctor so you can change your prescription to one that is covered by your plan or if necessary, work on requesting an exception.



Medicare and your plan are now providing you more time to work with your doctor on a solution in these cases. If your Medicare drug plan coverage was effective on January 1 or February 1, 2006, you will now have until March 31, 2006, to work with your doctor to switch to a prescription on your plan's list. Until then, your plan will allow your pharmacist to fill your current prescription through March 31, 2006.

If you join a Medicare drug plan and your coverage starts on March 1, 2006, or later, your plan will still allow you to fill a one-time, 30-day supply of your prescription in these cases. Then, you will have 30 days to talk with your doctor about a change that works for you.