

make it yours



Doctor and Pharmacist: The Dynamic Duo or the Odd Couple?

Your doctor prescribes a medication based on your condition and health history. Then your pharmacist fills the prescription. But how are they working together? And how can you get your money's worth from both?

Your doctor knows you. Your pharmacist knows medications. In many cases, the only link between them is you. Think about that ... aside from the prescription that your doctor writes for your pharmacist, two of the most significant members of your health care team usually don't talk to each other. That means it's up to you to make sure that nothing is overlooked and to get as much value as you can from each of them. How you work with them may determine how dynamic this duo is.

Start with your doctor. If he or she needs to prescribe a medication for you, make the most of your doctor's expertise by asking a few key questions up front:

- Can you please prescribe something that's on my insurance carrier's formulary? (You'll pay *full price* (\$\$\$!) for drugs that aren't on the formulary.)
- Is there a generic version that's on the formulary?
- Why did you choose this drug?
- Do you have any samples of this drug that I could try first?
- Is there a less expensive alternative, such as an over-the-counter drug, that would be just as effective?

Then, when you go to the pharmacy to have a prescription filled, ask to speak to a pharmacist, and get the most out of your pharmacist's expertise by asking:

- Is there a generic version that's on my formulary? (*Some pharmacies may automatically substitute a generic, while at others you may need to request it.*)
- Can you please review with me how I should take this medication ... how many times per day, early or late in the day, before or after eating, etc.?
- Are there any potential side effects that I should be aware of, or interactions with other medications I'm taking that I should watch for? (*Although this written information comes with your prescription, you might understand it more easily if the pharmacist describes it to you and gives you both a chance to discuss and ask questions.*)

As a patient—and a customer—of both, make sure to take advantage of all that your doctor and your pharmacist have to offer. Remember, they are both highly skilled and you're *paying* for their services.

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