

Oral Drug Therapy: How to Get, Handle, Take, and Store Your Medication Safely and Effectively

How do I get my oral drug therapy medication(s)?

Your oral medications will be filled through a *specialty pharmacy* – a pharmacy that dispenses drugs for complicated disease states such as cancer. This is usually a different pharmacy than the one where you get your other medications. These specialty pharmacies will mail the prescriptions to your home. They will call you to schedule delivery before you start treatment and before each refill. For more information, see *Specialty Medications and Pharmacies* on page 4.

Will my therapy be covered by insurance?

The Prior Authorization (PA) Department at Roswell Park will work with your insurance company to decide which specialty pharmacy to use for your prescription. Once your prescription is sent, the specialty pharmacy will reach out to you with co-pay information and to schedule delivery.

If for any reason the prescribed medication is either not covered by your insurance plan, or has a co-pay that is unacceptably high, please ask your specialty pharmacy about assistance programs. If the specialty pharmacy cannot give you the assistance you need, **DO NOT accept delivery of the medication** - please reach out to your clinic at Roswell Park. Your medical team and our financial assistance representatives will work together to identify resources for you and determine the best option moving forward.

Why is it important that I take my oral drug therapy as prescribed?

To make sure your medication works as intended, we prescribe them based on the way that they were studied for your specific disease. Taking your medication at a higher dose, or more frequently than prescribed, puts you at risk for more toxicity and side effects. Taking it at a lower dose or less frequently than prescribed, may cause the medication to be less effective.

It is important to note that there are times when your team may decide to recommend doses that are lower than the studied doses. They may do this as you are starting therapy, or later, or if you have certain side effects. We base dosing on our professional experience in ensuring the effectiveness of the medication while preventing side effects. No matter what dose of oral medication your team recommends for you, it is important to take it exactly as prescribed.

It may be difficult to take your medications exactly as scheduled. If you are having trouble, please reach out to your pharmacist to talk about ways to make it easier to remember to take your medication(s).

Will I have side effects?

Please refer to your patient education handout to learn about possible the side effects of your medication(s). Your Roswell Park pharmacist will discuss the specific side effects of your prescribed medication(s). It is common for patients to have a few side effects and we can prescribe medications to help manage them. We work to provide treatment for your cancer where the benefits are greater than the side effects that your treatment may cause.

If I have very bad side effects, should I discontinue my medication(s)?

If you have side effects that you cannot tolerate, please call the clinic right away. Once you call the clinic, a member of your team will recommend whether you should continue taking your medication(s).

Do not discontinue therapy without speaking to your medical team. Taking medication(s) consistently is important for the success of your therapy.

When should I contact the clinic?

Call your clinic...

- ✓ when you get your first shipment of medication so that we know the exact day you start taking your medication
- ✓ if you get a call telling you that your insurance will not cover your medication or if your co-pay is too high
- ✓ if you have side effects from your medication(s) and you are not sure how to manage them or if you should continue taking your medications(s)
- ✓ if you need help staying on your oral drug therapy schedule

Your clinic phone number: _____

Roswell Park's main number (open 24/7): **716-845-2300**

Safe Handling, Storage, and Disposal

How should I handle my medication?

- Wash your hands before and after touching your medication.
- Do not allow anyone not involved in your care to handle your medication. Only you or a designated caregiver should touch it.
- If someone else handles your medication, they should wear gloves.
- Never break, crush, chew, or open your tablets or capsules unless otherwise instructed.

How should this medication be stored?

- At home, store this medication separately, away from your other medicines.
- Store your medication in a place that is away from sources of water, direct sunlight and excessive heat, cold or humidity. Be sure children and pets cannot reach your pills.
- Read the medication package and any attached paperwork to see if there are other rules about how to store your medication, such as refrigeration.

What should I do if another person or pet swallows or is exposed to my medication?

- Keep calm.
- Flush the area with water, if the exposure was on the skin.
- Call the Poison Control Center immediately at **1-800-222-1222**.

What should I do with leftover medications if my treatment changes?

- **Do not put chemotherapy medications in the garbage (see below) or down the toilet.**
- Keep your oral chemotherapy stored in a safe place until you can return it.
- Roswell has drug disposal containers available on the 1st floor of the main hospital. They are located just past the ATM on the left.
- New York has *Take Back* programs for the collection of household drugs. Go to the NY Department of Conservation website www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/67720.html and click on "Find a free collection site near you"

**** If there is an urgent need to dispose of your medication and there are no drop off locations near you, follow these instructions:**

- Mix whole pills (do not crush or open) in water and add salt, dirt, ashes, or cat litter. Do not hide them in food.
 - Place mixture in a bag, box, or plastic tub that you can seal. Secure the container with strong tape.
 - Place the sealed container in your trash as close to trash collection day as possible.
 - **If you have any questions or concerns about your medication, please call**
-

Specialty Medications and Specialty Pharmacy

What is a specialty medication?

Specialty medications are drugs used to treat rare or complicated conditions. These drugs often need special insurance approval (*prior authorization*), storage, or monitoring, or they are expensive. You cannot get specialty medications at your neighborhood pharmacy. You must get them from a specialty pharmacy. The manufacturer of each medication decides what medications are only available through a specialty pharmacy. They make sure the medication is handled properly and safety is maintained.

What is a specialty pharmacy?

A specialty pharmacy can manage the extra requirements of specialty drugs. Specialty pharmacies typically provide extra services for their patients, such as on-call pharmacists to provide counseling and answer questions, help with prior authorizations, patient assistance programs, and medication delivery.

Which specialty pharmacy do I use?

Your insurance plan and the manufacturer of the specialty medication decide which specialty pharmacy will get your prescription. The physician, pharmacist or nurse let you know the name of your specialty pharmacy and give you their contact information.

How do I get my medications?

Your specialty pharmacy may not be located near where you live. Most specialty pharmacies will deliver your medications by mail order or courier. Order your refills about a week before you run out of drug. This allows the specialty pharmacy time to schedule your delivery.

- **Important:** Your specialty pharmacy does not contact us to let us know you have scheduled a delivery of your medication. Please contact us after you have set up your first delivery so we can schedule a follow-up appointment with you if one has not already been scheduled.

Who should I call if I have questions?

If you have questions about your medication or side effects, you can call your center at Roswell (GI, GU, Breast, etc.) or your specialty pharmacy. If you have side effects and call the specialty pharmacy, please make sure to tell your Roswell healthcare team because the specialty pharmacy may not notify us immediately. Questions about insurance coverage, payment, benefits, refills, or medication delivery should be sent to your specialty pharmacy. They will contact us if they need any additional information.

How Will I Get My Oral Chemotherapy Medications?

Your physician will electronically send your prescription to your specialty pharmacy.



Your insurance may require your doctor to provide more information (lab work, clinic notes, etc.) before they will cover this medication (*prior authorization*).

This step may take a few days.



Once approved, the specialty pharmacy will contact you to arrange payment and delivery. It is important that you pick up the call or have your voicemail set up to avoid delays.

Remember: your caller ID may show a 1-800 number or 'unavailable'



Make sure to keep track of how much medication you have left.

Be sure to call your specialty pharmacy at least 7 days before you will run out of medication to allow time for delivery.



Your prescription will be delivered by mail or courier to your home. Keep an eye out for your package on the day it is scheduled to be delivered.

Call your clinic to let them know you received your medication.



Call your healthcare team at Roswell to schedule a toxicity assessment appointment once you have scheduled the first delivery of your new medication.