

# RESPONSES TO COMMON PHARMACY QUESTIONS AND COMPLAINTS

## **1. How long is the patient wait?**

The patient wait varies based on the number of patients and number of prescriptions presented during a given time. The daily average wait from start to finish is approximately 20 minutes. During peak times, the wait will exceed this daily average, especially for patients with paper prescriptions. If more than 30 minutes has elapsed, from taking your check-in ticket from the kiosk (e.g. 123), or from receiving the alpha-numeric pickup ticket (e.g. A1234) please check with a staff member.

## **2. Do active duty patients have head of the line priority?**

Active duty patients in uniform are given priority service for the processing of their prescriptions because the pharmacy wants to minimize their time away from the work space. Time spent in the pharmacy is time not spent training or performing the Navy and Marine Corps mission. The ticket received following check-in at the counter will indicate "AD", for Active Duty patients.

Patients not enrolled to NMCS D with paper prescriptions are given a reduced priority because use of the NMCS D Pharmacy is one of three options available to them. Patients who are not enrolled (i.e. Prime to NMCS D) can easily fill their prescriptions at Retail Network Pharmacies, or through the Tricare Mail Order Pharmacy (TMOP). Active duty patients and TRICARE Prime patients seen by NMCS D providers can not easily select these options.

## **3. Why doesn't the pharmacy carry the medication my doctor prescribed?**

The medications stocked by the pharmacy include items required to be stocked at all Military Treatment Facilities (Basic Core Formulary), and additional items the local facility needs to take care of its active duty and enrolled population in a safe, cost effective manner.

In general small facilities (clinics) have limited formularies and large medical centers have expanded formularies. NMCS D has an extensive formulary compared to most Military Treatment Facilities; however, not all medications prescribed by civilian providers are available.

#### **4. Why does it take longer for patients with civilian prescriptions to receive service?**

The wait for patients with civilian prescriptions can be longer for two main reasons:

#1. Civilian prescriptions take longer to review, process, and check because they must be manually entered into the pharmacy computer system. Prescriptions for active duty and enrolled Prime patients are electronically entered into the pharmacy system by the prescriber, which dramatically decreases the processing time and the patient's waiting time.

#2. Patients with civilian prescriptions have readily available Tricare options for prescription service, which active duty and patients seen by NMCS D providers do not have. Additionally, active duty patients have first priority, followed by NMCS D Prime enrollees. Therefore, civilian prescriptions for non-enrollees are processed after the prescriptions for active duty and enrolled Prime patients. During busy periods non-enrolled patients and patients with civilian prescriptions may experience longer waiting times.

#### **5. Why can't I get a 3 month supply on my medication?**

The pharmacy prefers and generally dispenses a 3 month supply of chronic maintenance medications. This decreases the frequency patients need to come to the pharmacy, and most efficiently uses pharmacy labor resources.

Reasons for not getting a 3 month supply are listed below in order of occurrence:

- Medication is a controlled substance
- Provider did not write for a 3 month supply
- Medication is not considered a chronic medication
- Medication requires frequent dose adjustment and monitoring
- Medication is difficult to procure in large quantities due to supply or cost issues.

#### **6. Why must I call in my refills in advance of pickup?**

To efficiently utilize pharmacy labor and optimize the filling process for new prescriptions, most refills are processed by a Department Of Veteran's Affairs (VA) Consolidated Mail Order Pharmacy (CMOP) facility. The processing and mailing of refills by the VA CMOP can take up to 10 days, although most patients receive packages in 7 days or less.

The pharmacy does not process refills while patients wait. All refill requests must be phoned in or requested through the NMCS D Pharmacy website:

<https://159.71.170.20/scripts/mgwms32.dll?MGWLPN=DOD&WEBAPP=PHARMACYENTRY>

The pharmacy may provide an emergency supply to tie a patient over until their refill is ready.

#### **7. Why can't I get a vacation supply?**

The pharmacy computers monitor the TRICARE business rule of providing a refill when 75% or more of the medication is used, based on the prescription directions. As most medications are dispensed in 3 month supplies, a refill request that is more than 3 weeks early will be denied by the refill processing system. One month prescriptions (which include most controlled substances) can be filled not more than 7 days early.

Three weeks provide sufficient time for the patient to complete their vacation or get new prescriptions from their provider to have filled at the place of their stay for an extended vacation (i.e. more than 3 weeks).

#### **8. Why do I need my ID or the ID of the patient?**

Navy regulations require a system to identify outpatients at the time medications are dispensed. The Military ID card is the directed method of identifying military beneficiaries. Additionally, a valid ID card and a DEERS check ensure eligibility. The Patient's ID card is required to ensure eligibility, and help ensure the patient wishes another party to pick up their medication and receive information about their medical condition (protects patient privacy).

#### **9. Why do I need a new prescription for chronic medications?**

Per Navy regulations, prescriptions are only valid for 1 year from the date written. The time limits for controlled substances are more restrictive. After 1 year all remaining refills are void and a new prescription is required.

#### **10. Why doesn't the pharmacy accept faxed or oral prescriptions from my doctor's office?**

To ensure patient safety and minimize the possibility of fraudulent prescriptions Navy regulations prohibit the acceptance of oral prescriptions except in emergencies. Outpatient medications are seldom used for the treatment of emergency medical conditions.

Additionally, oral/faxed prescriptions increase the chance of error from misunderstanding/poor legibility of the message between the provider and the pharmacy staff. Finally, oral and fax prescriptions are common methods to submit false prescriptions as means to misdirect medications.

**11. Why doesn't the pharmacy have more staff?**

NMCS D is appropriately staffed based on the Navy Personnel Command manning plan and guidance of the BUMED Navy Pharmacy Manning Standard. Deployments, busy periods, and staff leave/training can result in periods of time when the pharmacy appears understaffed. However, in the aggregate the NMCS D Pharmacy has the level of staffing deemed appropriate by BUPERS and BUMED.

**12. Why did the pharmacy refuse to fill my prescription?**

The prescription did not meet the Manual of the Medical Department Chapter 21 requirements to be a valid prescription, or the pharmacy does not have the medication on formulary.

The most common omissions/commissions that make a prescription void are as follows:

- No signature by a provider
- Prescription appears altered or forged
- No date on the prescription
- The prescription has expired (1 yr for legend drugs, 30 days controlled substances)

**13. Why can't I pick up my new prescription on a latter day, after it has been processed.**

The pharmacy fills prescriptions for patients who present to the pharmacy. The number of prescriptions submitted by providers per day exceeds the number dispensed by approximately 10%. When the pharmacy processes a prescription it signals the Pharmacy Data Transaction System (PDT S) that the prescription was filled. This electronic transaction makes it difficult for patients to get the same or similar medications filled at Retail Pharmacies, through the TMOP, or at other military pharmacies.

Additionally, prescriptions that are processed trigger a billing of Other Health Insurance (OHI), which can result in fraudulent claims if the prescriptions are never picked up. To minimize the potential for patient inconvenience and fraudulent billing, the pharmacy staff reverses the filling of prescriptions that are not picked up at the end of the day, prior to the automated billing of OHI around 2400.

Finally, even for patients who do not use Tricare or do not have Other Health Insurance, the pharmacy does not have the resources (Staff, Budget, and Space) to needlessly fill extra prescriptions, which will likely never be picked up and will need to be returned to stock.

**14. How can I get my prescriptions mailed to me?**

NMCS D has a partnership with the VA to provide mailed refills. You can request your refills for shipment to your doorstep by calling 1-619-532-8400. Also, if you are enrolled to NMCS D and see a NMCS D provider, you can request that your medical renewals and routine new prescriptions be mailed to you.

**15. Where can I go for more information?**

Information on the TRICARE Pharmacy benefit, the Department of Defense (DOD) formulary and options for pharmacy service is available on the DOD Pharmacoeconomic Center website at:

<http://www.pec.ha.osd.mil/>

Information about the NMCS D Pharmacies to include, hours, locations, and medication availability is available at:

<http://www.med.navy.mil/sites/nmcsd/Patients/Pages/pharmacy.aspx>

**16. What do the formulary terms from the TRICARE website mean?**

Formulary is defined as a list of medications available to all eligible patients pursuant to a valid prescription. The MTF formulary must include all 1<sup>st</sup> Tier items on the DoD Basic Core Formulary (BCF) and must exclude all items designated as non-formulary or 3<sup>rd</sup> Tier. The thousands of medications that are neither 1<sup>st</sup> Tier nor 3<sup>rd</sup> Tier are classified as Uniform Core Formulary (UCF) or 2<sup>nd</sup> Tier.

The MTF only fills prescriptions for formulary medications. This will be all medications that are 1<sup>st</sup> Tier and the DoD 2<sup>nd</sup> Tier that the MTF adds to its drug list.

In general small facilities (clinics) have limited formularies with just a few 2<sup>nd</sup> Tier drugs available and large medical centers have expanded formularies with many 2<sup>nd</sup> Tier drugs.

NMCS D has an extensive formulary compared to most Military Treatment Facilities; however, not all DoD 2<sup>nd</sup> Tier medications are formulary or available. The MTF will only fill civilian prescriptions for non-enrollees for the medications on its formulary. Medications not the MTF formulary (all 3<sup>rd</sup> Tier and many 2<sup>nd</sup> Tier) are available through the Retail Network or TRICARE Mail Order Pharmacy (TMOP).

Through the TMOP and the TRICARE Retail Network Pharmacies, BCF medications have a \$3 copay, UCF Medications have a \$3 co-pay if generic and a \$9 co-pay if brand name. Non-Formulary medications have a \$22 co-pay.

**17. What can I do to help?**

The pharmacy department appreciates the support of its Red Cross Volunteers who assist with handing out refills and answering patient questions. Contact the Red Cross at 619-532-8435.

**18. What can I do to minimize my waiting time?**

- \* Try to avoid the pharmacy during peak hours of operation and the day prior to or after a federal holiday
- \* The pharmacy is busiest during the hours of 11:00 AM - 1:30 PM and 4:00 PM - 5:30 PM.
- \* The busiest days in the pharmacy are Monday and Friday
- \* Have your military ID card ready to present to the pharmacy staff member before you approach the window
- \* Use the refill call-in system to process your refills to reduce your waiting time