**FAQ:**

## **Adolescent and Young Adult (AYA) Cancer Patients Ask the Pharmacist**

Often times AYA cancer patients do not realize that the pharmacist is a member of their medical team. The pharmacist does more than just fill a prescription bottle for patients. They are a resource that all AYA cancer patients need to take advantage of to help better understand the medications they are taking and what options they have for those prescribed medications.

*Elephants and Tea* spoke with you, the AYA cancer patient, on what questions you frequently want answered when going to the pharmacist. So, be sure to ask these questions next time you visit your community Walgreens.



### Is there an outcome difference between a generic drug and a name brand drug?

Typically, no! In the oral oncology space, it is very rare that a brand name will be medically necessary. In order for a generic medication to even be on the market, it must meet the same approved characteristics of its brand name counterpart. Meaning, it is the same strength, same dosage form, and has the same quality and performance measures. Generic medications provide the same clinical benefit as its brand-name version.



### What if I cannot afford the medication prescribed to me?

It is so important to advocate for yourself or your family member when it comes to the affordability of your medication. This is often a part of the pharmacist's or pharmacy team's job that few people know about because it's done behind the scenes. Not only can your community Walgreens pharmacist help you find cost-savings on your prescriptions, but they can help connect you with pharmacists like me who can do even more. My team is part of an oncology-specialized network of community-based specialty pharmacies that is trained in managing the complexities of the oncology health system. I know it can be really scary to show up to your pharmacy and hear that your medication isn't covered or it has some astronomical copayment – that's where we come in. My team and I provide assistance to the medical team to work to get your medication covered through your insurance plan, then we can help you decrease the cost by helping you sign up for copayment assistance through the manufacturer or through different foundations. Our goal is to help connect you to all of the resources out there to make the cost of your medication a non-issue. There's already enough you have to worry about – getting your medication shouldn't be one of them.

### What is the best way to provide you my medical history?

Don't be shy! If you are at your local Walgreens, I understand it can be intimidating if the line is long or the pharmacist looks busy. But, you are never interrupting us and this is why we are here! Simply ask for a consultation and you can have some private time with your pharmacist. You can also ask the pharmacist if there is a specialty pharmacist they can connect you to in order to discuss your history at length. My team and I are specially trained in managing complex conditions and it is part of our patient consultations to gather pertinent medical history such as allergies, other medications you may take (including IV chemotherapy if applicable) and your health conditions. We are typically located within or very near to cancer centers or hospitals and are designed to have the time to spend with you and your loved ones to ensure you have the best care.

### Can you help me understand the toxicity of my chemotherapies?

Absolutely. Especially if you are on any oral chemotherapy regimens, your community specialty pharmacy will be the best resource for you. We have the time and the expertise to deep dive into the drug information and work hand-in-hand with your medical team to help understand your lab results, any genetic abnormalities or biomarkers that may impact your therapy and to determine how your therapy is working. Even if you don't get your specialty medication filled at one of our locations, or your question is regarding IV chemotherapy toxicities – please still use us as a resource. We have an extensive network of peers and partners in the healthcare community that we rely on to help us make informed decisions and we will collaborate to get you the best information as quickly as possible.

### What should I be aware of when switching insurance companies?

There are two things I would say are extremely important before switching companies. Number one – you can ask to see a plan's formulary before you sign up for that plan. If you are already on a medication and you know you are going to stay on it, check the plan's formulary to find out what tier your medication falls in. You can determine up front if your current medication will cost you more or less money and if there is any pre-authorization that would need to be completed. Number two – will switching companies impact where you can fill your prescription? If it's important to you to stay at your regular pharmacy, then be sure to ask what pharmacy is preferred for your network for both regular medications and specialty medications. You may find out that you would have to use mail order or switch companies so this information can be very valuable to ensure continuity of care.

## Is there a different form of the medication (i.e. liquid, crushable, etc.) to help me swallow?

The answer here is... maybe. There are many medications that come in different dosage forms or that can be manipulated into a different dosage form, but there are certain medications that cannot be altered. It is really important to ask your pharmacist what your options are. Even if there is not an acceptable way to alter the form of the medication (do not crush/dissolve/or chew for example), there are tips and tricks that we can provide you with to help make taking your medication easier. If those tips and tricks still don't work for you, we will work with your provider to determine if there is an alternative medication to switch you to that would give you the same therapeutic benefit.

## What are the drug's side effects?

Knowing the side effects of your medications, both the common and the rare, is a really important piece of the treatment puzzle. I absolutely recommend you fill at least your chemotherapy medication with a specialty pharmacy if only to get these key pieces of information. Not only will we discuss with you the most common side effects, but we will talk you through how to manage these side effects and recommend certain products or treatments for those side effects. We will also tell you what to look for in the event you have a serious side effect of the medication and the proper steps you need to take to alert your physician or us at the pharmacy. The reality is that your community pharmacist can look up side effects of any medication on the market, but they typically do not see oncology medications every day, so finding a resource that has the knowledge is key to getting you the most accurate information. Especially with Walgreens, we have over 300 community-based specialty pharmacies that can get you to the right people to answer your questions.

## What should I do if I experience a side effect?

I encourage all of my patients and their caregivers to program our phone number into their cell phones and to call us if they even think they are having a side effect. With my team being located inside of the cancer center, we are often the quickest link to the rest



of the healthcare team if there's a question or concern. With every medication, we expect certain side effects, those which we will go over with you before you start your medication. In the event that you experience a side effect, please let us know. We are here to help you manage the side effect or help you determine if you need to be seen by your physician or if you need to stop taking the medication all together. It is rare, but in the event of a severe allergic reaction, we always recommend dialing 911 first before calling any other healthcare provider.

## What are the protocols for checking if my order is ready?

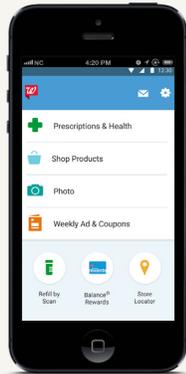
There are so many ways for you to know when your prescription is ready. When you fill with one of our community-based specialty pharmacies, we will be in communication with you via telephone 5 to 7 days before your refill is even due. During these calls we will assess your readiness for refill and discuss any changes in therapy you've had and determine if you're experiencing side effects. We want to ensure that you have all of the support you need so you don't miss any doses of your medications and that you have the tools you need to manage any side effects. Because we are proactively managing your refills, you will know exactly when your medication will be filled and ready for either pickup or delivery to your home. We also encourage the use of our Walgreens app to have your medical and prescription information at your fingertips. It is the quickest way to determine if your medication is ready or if it's delayed, the reason it is delayed.





### Is there an app I can download on my phone to help me keep track of my prescriptions?

Yes! The Walgreens app just got an incredible makeover and gives you access to myWalgreens, a personalized shopping experience and a really easy way to access your medical history. We have tools right at your fingertips to order prescription refills, check your history, use a pill reminder, and talk with a pharmacist among many other things! You can also set up your Walgreens Cash rewards and digital wallet to have a touch-free checkout experience as well. So no matter what time of day it is, you can easily click on the app and find everything you need.



### How can my parents/caregivers help me manage my medications?

At our oncology-specialized community-based specialty pharmacies, we strongly encourage a caregiver or parent be present during your counseling sessions and be an active part of your journey. It's always good to have a second set of eyes and ears! You're going through enough as it is, and a lot of information being given to you can be extremely overwhelming. We have counseling tailored for the caregiver as well and can help answer any questions. We also encourage the use of the Walgreens app because there is an awesome feature where you can manage family prescriptions – so no matter the way you want to get information, whether it's from one of us personally at the pharmacy or via a digital solution, it's there for your convenience.

**Walgreens can connect you with answers beyond chemotherapy medication.**

**Contact us: 888-782-8443**

Hearing Impaired (TTY) 866-830-4366

**For more information visit [Walgreens.com/cancerhelp](http://Walgreens.com/cancerhelp)**

