

# Drug Utilization Review

## Why are my prescriptions reviewed?

- Express Scripts checks your prescriptions for potential safety issues, such as drug interactions and allergic reactions.
- This feature of your prescription drug benefit enables Express Scripts and A&M Care to help prevent adverse reactions and improve the quality of your healthcare.
- This feature is especially important for people taking multiple medications who should be aware that certain medications—whether prescription or over-the-counter—can cause negative side effects when taken in combination.
- This happens once Express Scripts receives your prescription information, whether you have your prescription filled through **Express Scripts Home Delivery** or at a participating retail pharmacy.

## What happens if a safety issue is identified?

- Express Scripts' system sends an online alert to the pharmacy.
- The pharmacist may then contact your doctor to discuss the prescription, since the doctor might not know the full prescription history for each of his or her patients.
- At a retail pharmacy, the pharmacist uses his or her professional judgment when reviewing Express Scripts' message and acting on the specific clinical concern.

## What types of safety issues does the review check for? Express Scripts' system could raise a red flag if:

- The prescribed drug may have a negative interaction with another medication you are taking.
- Your records indicate that you may be allergic to the medication.
- The medication may have a potential negative effect on a preexisting medical condition.
- The prescribed dose may be too high for you.
- A refill request is submitted too soon before the eligible refill date.

## Alerts for certain prescriptions

Express Scripts will send “hard alerts” to the retail pharmacy if a patient’s prescription is flagged for one of the reasons listed below. These alerts are clinical warning messages that inform the pharmacist about a potential safety issue and advise that coverage of the prescription is rejected until the pharmacist takes one of the actions indicated in the message.

The alerts have an override capability that allows the pharmacist to process a claim once he or she has taken the appropriate action and verified that the medication is appropriate for the patient. For prescriptions filled through **Express Scripts Home Delivery**, Express Scripts' system requires the Express Scripts pharmacist to acknowledge and resolve the alert before the prescription can be filled.

At retail pharmacies, pharmacists use their professional judgment when reviewing Express Scripts' message and acting on the specific clinical concern.

Hard alerts are issued when ...

➤ **The patient requests a refill too soon**

A refill request is considered “too soon” or “early” if a patient hasn’t used at least 75% of the previous fill of the medication. Exceptions to the “refill too soon” policy are if the doctor has increased the dosage of the medication or if the patient has lost the medication or needs a supply to take on vacation.

An alert will be triggered if our records show that the patient shouldn’t yet have reached the 75% mark. If the refill is ordered through the **Express Scripts Pharmacy**, it typically won’t be filled, unless one of the exceptions applies. For the patient’s convenience, we may hold the prescription until the eligible refill date, then process and ship it.

➤ **The prescribed dose exceeds the maximum recommended daily dose**

To safeguard patients against medication overuse or overdose, an alert is triggered if a prescription is written for more than the manufacturer’s recommended daily dose. The pharmacist may resubmit the claim after taking the indicated action, such as correcting the dosage or verifying the dose with the doctor.

➤ **A medication could cause severe drug to drug interaction**

An alert is triggered if the prescribed drug has the potential to cause harm when used in combination with other medication the patient is taking. For mail-order prescriptions, Medco has implemented special procedures for recognizing these interactions and notifying the prescribing doctor. At retail pharmacies, the alert prevents the claim from being processed until the pharmacist enters an override code indicating that the doctor was consulted.