

Q & A

CHANGES IN THE UFT WELFARE FUND PRESCRIPTION DRUG PROGRAM THAT TAKE EFFECT ON JULY 1, 2005

Why are we making changes to our drug plan at this time?

There is never a good time to make changes like these. However, there are several factors that contributed to this decision. The trustees had wanted to wait until the contract was settled, but the contract fight drags on and for the financial reasons we explain below it was imperative that something be done now.

The trustees had also wanted to wait until the issues with the PICA program had been resolved. Fortunately, that has now been accomplished and an agreement between the city and the municipal unions has been reached to save the PICA program. In order to do so, the UFT Welfare Fund — along with the union welfare funds of the other municipal unions — has assumed the responsibility of covering the psychotropic and asthma drugs for our members. These drugs were previously covered under the city's PICA program. These drugs are very expensive.

Separate from the PICA program, the Fund spends more than \$100 million dollars annually on its prescription drug program and annually the cost has been increasing approximately 10%. The added responsibility of providing the psychotropic and asthma drugs to our members, combined with the spiraling costs for prescription drugs, simply does not allow the Fund to sustain the current level of benefits.

The Fund has done a good job of maintaining drug co-pays. While other plans, both in the public and private sectors, have continued to raise the costs members pay, we have managed to hold the line. There have been no increases for the past 14 years and every UFT member continues to be entitled to \$100,000 in prescription drugs annually.

But now our Fund reserves are at a dangerously low level and it is our responsibility to make these adjustments in order to continue to provide all of the benefits our members need, now and into the future.

The New Drug Plan Design

There are three “tiers” of drugs in the new plan. What does that mean?

Every drug is classified as either a generic drug (Tier 1), a preferred-brand drug (Tier 2) or a non-preferred brand drug (Tier 3).

Are there some prescription medications that were previously excluded that are now covered?

Yes. In order to utilize the first line of medications in Step Therapy — which is explained further down — the Fund will now include drugs to treat ulcers, acid reflux disease and heartburn. Some examples of these are Zantac, Prilosec and Tagamet and their generic counterparts.

In addition the Fund will now pay for **prenatal vitamins**.

There is also a new Retail Maintenance Pharmacy option. What is that?

You now have a third way of filling a prescription. In addition to getting a 30-day supply at a local pharmacy and a 90-day supply via mail order at Express Scripts/NPA, you can get a 90-day supply at a local pharmacy if it is in a new pharmacy network.

Are the co-pays different for each tier?

Yes. Here is a chart showing the co-pays for each tier:

Category	Tier #	Retail Pharmacy co-pay (30 day supply)	Express Scripts/NPA Mail Order Pharmacy co-pay (90 day supply)	Retail Maintenance Pharmacy co-pay (90 day supply at a local network pharmacy)
Generic	1	\$5	\$10	\$10
Preferred Brand (Formulary)	2	\$15	\$30	\$40
Non-Preferred Brand (Not on Formulary)	3	\$35	\$70	\$80

What is a generic drug?

A generic drug contains the same active ingredients in the same strengths and dosage as a brand-name drug, but since it does not have a protected brand name and is not advertised it is much less expensive. Since generic drugs have the same active ingredients as brand-name drugs they can be used by patients of all ages to achieve the same medical effects provided by brand-name drugs. Some brand-name drugs are still under patent protection and so there are no generics for them.

Generic drugs must meet the same U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations for purity, strength and safety as brand-name drugs. They just cost less and that is why your co-pay is less.

What is a preferred-brand (formulary) drug?

First, a formulary is a list of approved medications created by a committee of doctors and other health care professionals for your pharmacy benefit plan. The formulary includes all generic drugs and select brand-name medications.

There is a *preferred* brand drug (Tier 2) for most medical conditions. If your physician prescribes a brand-name drug for your particular condition — either because there is no generic or there is a special reason your physician wants to use the branded drug — and if it is on this list, then you will pay the Tier 2 co-pay.

So then there are non-preferred brand drugs?

Yes. Any brand-name drug not listed on the formulary is considered a non-preferred drug. Your co-pays are higher since there are more cost-effective alternatives that are on the formulary to treat your condition.

If I am currently using a non-preferred brand drug, how can I switch to a preferred or a generic drug?

First, speak to your doctor about your medication and discuss the options. Then your doctor can choose a brand or generic from the formulary list and either call-in or write you a new prescription.

Mandatory Mail-Order Program

Must I use either of the mail-order program options?

Yes. Maintenance medications (those taken regularly over an extended period of time) can no longer be filled at a retail pharmacy after they have being filled three times, *regardless of the number of refills indicated on the prescription*. After those three times you must use either of the mail-order options — Express Scripts/NPA or the new Retail Maintenance Pharmacy. But be aware that the co-pays are higher if you use the Retail Maintenance Pharmacy program rather than sending it to the Express Scripts/NPA mail-order pharmacy.

I'm familiar with the Express Scripts/NPA mail-order pharmacy but tell me again about the retail maintenance program?

This is an added benefit requested by many members. At a local pharmacy that has elected to participate in this retail maintenance program, you will be able to fill a prescription of a maintenance drug for a 90-day supply or 100 dosage units, whichever is greater. You may bring in your prescription or your physician may call it in.

How can I tell if my local pharmacy participates in this retail maintenance program?

Enclosed is a list of pharmacies that participate in the program. However, this list is constantly being updated and the best way to find out if your particular pharmacy participates would be to ask them, or call the toll-free Express Scripts number of 1-800-467-2006 to inquire.

Can I use Express Scripts/NPA for drugs in all three tiers?

Yes, if they are maintenance drugs. Express Scripts/NPA mail-order service fills prescriptions for maintenance drugs for members for any generic or brand-name drugs — Tiers 1, 2 or 3 — through the mail. The telephone number is 1-800-233-7139 and the Web site is www.express-scripts.com.

Only maintenance drugs?

Yes. Only medications that are taken on a regular basis for at least three months.

Like what, for example?

Drugs prescribed for high blood pressure, birth control, high cholesterol, change of life, arthritis, asthma, anti-depressants are just some examples.

What kind of drugs should I not use Express Scripts/NPA for?

Drugs used for short periods of time and/or that must be started immediately. These are called acute drugs. Examples include antibiotics and drugs used in emergency situations. NOTE: controlled substances that your physician must order monthly should be ordered from your local pharmacy and not at the mail-order pharmacy.

How much can I order at any one time?

Express Scripts/NPA mail order is authorized to dispense up to a 90-day supply, 100 dosage units or multiple package sizes, whichever is greater. If your prescription indicates refills, you can get up to three in any one-year period. If further medication is necessary, a new prescription must be obtained from your doctor.

I only use brand name drugs. Can I get them through this service?

Yes. However, members who belong to the Cost Care Program must pay the difference between the cost of the name-brand drug and the generic, if one is available, in addition to the applicable co-pay.

I am currently taking a maintenance medication but do not use the mail-order pharmacy. Must I use the mail-order pharmacy immediately or can I wait until my medication has been filled another three times?

If you have already had it filled three times at a retail pharmacy then you **MUST IMMEDIATELY** utilize one of the mail-order pharmacy choices we discussed above. This requirement is in effect regardless of the number of refills stated on your prescription.

Is this requirement going to cost me money?

Quite the opposite. At your local pharmacy, if you take one pill per day of a preferred brand-name formulary drug (Tier 2), you can get a one-month supply for \$15. Filled three times, for 90-days worth of drugs, your cost is \$45.

But by utilizing Express Scripts/NPA mail order, your cost for the same medication for the same 90 days is \$30. So using the mail-order program is not only more convenient but will save you money in every instance.

I have many prescriptions. How do I know how much to make my check out for?

The enclosed formulary can be used as a guide to determine how much your co-pay will be for mail order. Medications that are listed in lower case letters are generic medications and have the lowest co-pay (Tier 1, see table above). Medications that are listed in capital letters are preferred brand medications and have the middle co-pay (Tier 2).

If your medication does not appear on the formulary or you have any questions or concerns, call Express Scripts Customer Service at 1-800-467-2006. A representative will verify your co-pay. Beginning June 1, you can also check your co-pays on-line at www.express-scripts.com.

Does Express Scripts/NPA mail order accept credit cards?

Most definitely. In fact, if you wish, the company will keep your credit card information on file so you do not have to read off numbers every time you call for refills or write out numbers online or with an initial prescription.

Suppose I have questions about an interaction with other medication(s) that I am taking, or possible reactions to the medication itself?

Your doctor should alert you to possible reactions and should know other medications you are taking for possible interactions. However, if you ever have a question of that nature, Express Scripts/NPA mail order always has a pharmacist on duty available to help you.

You may also visit www.drugdigest.org for information about interactions and side effects.

Must I use the Express Scripts/NPA mail order postage-paid envelope to send in prescriptions?

That envelope is provided only as a convenience. Whether you use it or your own, what must be clear to Express Scripts/NPA is the address where you would like the drugs to be sent. There is no limit to the number of prescriptions that can be included in one envelope.

So how do I get one of those postage-paid envelopes?

You will receive one every time you receive a package of drugs from Express Scripts/NPA mail order. The envelopes are also available:

- From your chapter leader;
- by calling the Welfare Fund's Hotline, which operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week: 1-212-539-0539;
- by calling the Welfare Fund during business hours at 1-212-539-0500; or
- by calling the Express-Scripts hotline: 1-800-467-2006 — also open 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Can I have my drugs shipped anywhere?

Anywhere in the U.S. But due to different rules and regulations in other countries, medications cannot be shipped abroad. You can have the medication shipped to your place of business; your spouse's/domestic partner's place of business; your dependent's college dorm, etc., as long as it is in the United States. Just be sure to clearly indicate the address where you want the medications to go on the envelope when you send in your prescriptions or refill form.

I was just prescribed a new medication that my physician wants me to start right away and I will be using it for a length of time. How can I best utilize the program?

Ask your physician for two prescriptions. The first should be written for a 30-day supply and should be taken to your local pharmacy, where you will use your drug card. The second prescription should be written for a 90-day supply, or 100 unit doses, whichever is larger, and you should immediately mail it to Express Scripts/NPA mail order.

How much time should I allow for my prescriptions to be delivered using the mail-order program?

Even though Express Scripts/NPA mail order will dispense the medication within 24 hours of receiving the prescription, lag time should be allowed for delivery in both directions. Experience shows that it can take 10-14 days from the date you drop the envelope in the mailbox to when you receive the prescription.

How can I be sure that I will not run out of a medication before my refill arrives?

While you receive a three-month supply of medication, refills may be ordered after two months. So, if at the start of the third month you reorder your medication(s) you will be sure not to run out.

And exactly how do I order refills?

You have no less than four different ways to do that:

- 1- The fastest way is to use the automated touch-tone refill system by calling **1-800-233-7139** and follow the instructions.
- 2- The next fastest is by going to the Express Scripts Web site (www.express-scripts.com) and clicking Order Refills.
- 3- You may also put the refill slip that came with your original order along with a check (or fill in the credit card information) into the postage-paid envelope — or any stamped envelope — and mail it.
- 4- If you have misplaced the refill slip, fill out the required information on the Express Scripts/NPA mail-order envelope, add a check (or fill in the credit card information) and mail it.

Is Express Scripts/NPA mail order unionized?

Absolutely. Non-managerial personnel in Express Scripts/NPA mail order, including all pharmacists, are members of SEIU Local 36.

Prior Authorization Program

What exactly is the Prior Authorization Program?

This program covers certain drugs that require special action by your physician before you can have a prescription for them filled through the Welfare Fund. These drugs all have **[PA]** next to them on the formulary that accompanies this Q&A. For any of these “PA” drugs, your physician should call Express Scripts and may be asked to mail or fax both a Letter of Medical Necessity and a diagnosis to Express Scripts.

This is merely a continuation of the Prior Authorization Program that has been in effect for some time. Now, with the PICA program changes, the fund will also include some psychotropic and asthma drugs as “PA” drugs.

Step Therapy Program

What is Step Therapy?

This is a program that encourages the use of the best medication for your condition. It applies to first-time users of drugs in the psychotropic, asthma and PPI (heartburn and ulcer) categories. It goes into effect from July 1 forward. That means if you have been using a medication in these categories before that date you will not be affected and can continue to get that medication.

Under the new program, when you start on one of these medications you must first try a well-established treatment that is known to be safe and effective. This is called “first-line therapy,” and it is the preferred therapy for most people. It also usually has the lowest co-pay.

If your doctor has found the first-line drug has not been very successful for you, he or she may request a second-line therapy. But no second-line therapy will be approved unless the first-line therapy has been tried.

How do I know which medications require Step Therapy?

All Preferred medications that have an indication of **[STP]** in the enclosed “2005 Express Scripts National Preferred Formulary” will require Step Therapy.

Remember, the Step Therapy program **only applies to new prescriptions for patients who have never taken these medications before**. If you are already on a medication that has an **[STP]** next to it, you may continue to take it but you must use one of the mail-order options.

Please note: If you have taken a medication in the past that has an **[STP]** indicated next to it, but you haven’t had a prescription filled for that medication in the past five months, you may be subject to Step Therapy the next time you attempt to fill a prescription for it.

As part of this program, are there some prescription medications that the Welfare Fund will now cover that were previously excluded?

Yes. In order to utilize the first line of medications in Step Therapy, the Fund will now include drugs to treat ulcers, acid reflux disease and heartburn. Some examples of these are Zantac, Prilosec and Tagamet and their generic counterparts.

In addition the Fund will now pay for **prenatal vitamins**.

CuraScript Specialty Pharmacy

What is the CuraScript Specialty Pharmacy?

That is a division of Express Scripts that provides prescription drugs with personalized care. Due to the special handling of these drugs, a patient care coordinator will be assigned to you to help organize delivery — which is free — to remind you when refills are needed, speak to your physician and do everything to ensure that your therapy is consistent.

Due to the nature of these specialty medications, CuraScript Specialty Pharmacy will only dispense a 30-day supply with the following co-pays: Tier 1 – \$10; Tier 2 – \$30; Tier 3 – \$70. CuraScript Specialty Pharmacy will contact you after the first one of these medications has been filled in order to coordinate future refills on that medication.

How do I know which medications will be handled by the CuraScript Specialty Pharmacy?

All Preferred medications that have an indication of **[CS]** in the enclosed “2005 Express Scripts National Preferred Formulary” will be handled by the CuraScript Specialty Pharmacy.

Questions and Answers

If I have any additional questions or need more Express Scripts/NPA envelopes, where can I get them?

As we indicated above, there are several easy ways to get any of these:

Contact your chapter leader.

You can call the Express Scripts Customer Service number of 1-800-467-2006, any hour of the day or night, seven days a week.

You can call the UFT Welfare Fund Forms hotline at 1-212-539-0539, which is also always available to you, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The Welfare Fund office is open during business hours; call 1-212-539-0500.

Finally, information is also available at www.uft.org and www.express-scripts.com.