

PATIENT RESOURCES

Lyme and associated tick-borne diseases (TBD) present complicated challenges for patients. *LymeDisease.org* screens a wealth of information and posts selected sources on our website. Please visit *LymeDisease.org* (click on LYME BASICS - RESOURCES) for recommended books, articles, videos and links to the internet.



ASSESSING MEDICATIONS

In our current healthcare system, access to appropriate medically necessary medications continues to be a challenge for Lyme patients for a number of reasons.

Given the politics of Lyme, the personal financial burden for patients seeking diagnosis and treatment can be overwhelming. Check out these programs that offer assistance.

PHARMACIES

A knowledgeable pharmacist is a pivotal part of your healthcare. These reliable sources are most commonly available at a local pharmacy that provides personalized attention. Independent pharmacies also have greater access to more wholesalers and greater flexibility to order a more effective generic brand. Often it is better to pay a little more at a pharmacy that provides this service.

Outlet stores and supermarkets are generally cheaper than pharmacy chains since they typically use their pharmacy as a loss leader to draw customers into the store. Don't waste time with insurance company approvals given their barriers and manipulations to using their 90-day prescriptions or mail order pharmacies for a generic medication in which the cash price is less or close to the insurance company co-pay. Be cautious about whether generics are equivalent. Demand generic brands that are known to be equivalent with the medication you need and avoid those known to be inequivalent.

Be cautious when using Internet and foreign pharmacies. Many "Canadian Pharmacies" are not located in Canada, and there are risks of receiving substandard, fraudulent and potentially toxic medications.

DISCOUNTS

If you are having difficulty filling your prescriptions, you may be interested in the following resources:

To access discount coupons, check out the website for the pharmaceutical company that makes the medication you need. These websites are often identified as *(name of the drug).com*.

A number of companies provide discount cards for medications. They are mailed to physicians and also available on the Internet:

Needy Meds: needymeds.org/index.htm

Healthcare Alliance: TheHealtCareAlliance.com

Half Off: HalfOffRx.com

National Prescription Savings Network: NPSNCard.com

Patient Savings Alliance: PatientSavingsAlliance.com

Avia Partners: AviaPartners.com

PDR card: pdr.net/pharmacy-savings/discount-card-for-patients

Partnership for Prescription Assistance A clearinghouse for patients to network with pharmaceutical companies with patient assistance programs. Many such companies provide discount prices and/or free medication to individuals that meet income requirements. pparx.org

GoodRx Gathers millions of current prices, available discounts, and savings tips for prescriptions at major U.S. pharmacies "to make you an informed consumer." They are a small company based in Santa Monica, CA, that does not sell medications. Their posted prices allow you to comparison shop and see whether switching pharmacies or using a discount or savings tip will save you money. They list and provide free discount coupon prices that have no obligations or hidden fee.

Check their website to better understand how prescription prices and discounts work since pharmacies offer more than one price:

- A "cash price" if you don't have insurance or if your insurance company won't cover that drug or it's not on their "formulary."
- A "club price" if you join that pharmacy's club (sometimes free, sometimes requiring a paid membership). Pharmacies don't always tell you when a lower club price is available. No insurance is required.
- A "coupon price" can be confusing as it is negotiated between a pharmacy and an insurance company. Virtually all pharmacies contract with companies called Pharmacy Benefit Managers (PBMs) to provide discounted prices for Americans with insurance. These same contracts also allow people not using insurance to receive a smaller discount when they use a free discount coupon or card. They suggest alternative less-expensive drugs and provide information on manufacturer coupons, drug shortages, recall info, and pill identification tools.

Visit GoodRx.com for further information.

Costco Their drug pricing tool is difficult to find on their website. They do not carry every medication but are a useful price guide as they reportedly charge 3% above wholesale. You do not have to be a member to use their pharmacy.



FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

LymeAid4Kids For those under age 21 who need diagnosis and treatment but lack insurance coverage. Visit lymediseaseassociation.org

The Lymelight Foundation For those through age 25. Visit lymelightfoundation.org

Robert C Bransfield, MD, DLFAPA, contributed to this article. His sage advice is designed for patients faced with finding affordable, effective and safe medications.

The Bay Area Lyme Foundation (BALF) offers free tick testing nationwide. In partnership with Northern Arizona University and the Laurel Foundation, data collected from their testing program may help us understand the distribution of TBD and the risk of acquiring such diseases. For more information visit the LDo website, click on News & Blogs - News 18 FEB