

Tips for refilling your hydroxychloroquine (Plaquenil) prescription

Due to the coronavirus (COVID-19), people who have been prescribed hydroxychloroquine (Plaquenil) and chloroquine (Aralen) to treat their lupus and other autoimmune diseases are experiencing difficulties getting their prescriptions filled. As stories in the news about the potential use of both for the treatment of COVID-19 circulate, supplies may temporarily decrease and become hard to find -- even for those who have taken the medication for years.

Here are some tips on what to do if you have a prescription for hydroxychloroquine or chloroquine.

Be proactive

If you are due for a refill, contact your prescribing doctor and submit the refill to your pharmacy now. If your pharmacy requires a diagnosis code for your prescription, plan ahead and ask your provider to give you the lupus diagnosis code on the script or in an attached letter.

Ask your doctor to prescribe a 90-day supply, instead of a 30 day supply, to make sure you have enough in case it becomes more difficult to access later. If your pharmacy will not fill a 90-day prescription due to a shortage of supply, ask for what you can get based on what is available now. Asked to be contacted as soon as the pharmacy's stock is replenished.

Call around to different pharmacies

Through your usual pharmacy may not have your medication in stock, call around to different pharmacies in your area -- including those outside of your city -- to see which ones might have stock left. Don't neglect grocery store pharmacies -- they might have more in stock than stand-alone pharmacies. You can also try mail order pharmacies, which are different from online pharmacies. Talk to your insurance company about whether they work with any mail order pharmacies.

Try to refill your prescription before the refill date

Some insurances are waiving their block on refilling before the allowed date. If you're able to refill before then, be sure to continue to take only the prescribed amount.

Talk to your pharmacist

Inform your pharmacist of the reason you are taking the medication -- some states allow pharmacists to prioritize certain prescriptions if the stock is low. If the medication is out of stock at a particular pharmacy, the pharmacists there may still be able to help you find a reputable place to refill. They may know of pharmacies that ship across state lines -- if that is the case, ask your prescribing doctor to write you a prescription for that location.

Carefully consider online pharmacy options

During this time of heightened concern over medication supplies, it is important to be mindful of fraudulent pharmacies and people who are attempting to profit off the fear the coronavirus has created. We recommend using the Federal Food and Drug Administration's [tips for buying medicines safely online](#).

Look into out-of-network pharmacies

If your in-network pharmacy is unable to fill your prescription, an out-of-network pharmacy may be able to -- although your co-pay may be higher.

Talk to your prescribing doctor

If you are still struggling to find a pharmacy that has your medication in stock, talk with your provider about a treatment plan. Do not cut back on your medications or skip doses on your own.

File a consumer complaint if necessary and report shortages

If you believe you have been unfairly denied a prescription fill or refill, find your state board of pharmacy's phone number or email address to file a

consumer complaint. If pharmacies in your area are out of your medication, report it to the FDA at drugshortages@fda.hhs.gov.