

06-09

**OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE  
ALL-EMPLOYEES MEMORANDUM**

**DATE:** March 31, 2009

**EMPLOYEE MEDICAL HEALTH PLAN OF SUFFOLK COUNTY**

**DRUG QUANTITY MANAGEMENT (DQM)  
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**


As part of our continuing effort to provide our members with important updates regarding the Employee Medical Health Plan of Suffolk County (EMHP), the Labor/Management Committee, which oversees the EMHP, is pleased to provide you with important information concerning your prescription drug benefit.

The Drug Quantity Management (DQM) program is designed to help you get the medications you need, when you need them, in safe, economical amounts. The program follows guidelines developed by the U.S. Food & Drug Administration, medical researchers, and drug manufacturers. For your convenience, refer to the attached summary for frequently asked questions concerning the DQM program.

The EMHP and Express Scripts (ESI) websites ([www.emhp.org](http://www.emhp.org) and [www.express-scripts.com](http://www.express-scripts.com)) contain important information regarding your health benefits. A list of drugs in EMHP's Drug Quantity Management Program can be obtained by calling ESI at 1-800-950-2662 or by downloading it from their website.

We recommend that you show your doctor this list. Your doctor may refer to this list when prescribing medication you need for your good health and the health of your family, while making sure you utilize your drug plan in the most cost efficient manner.

Should you have any inquiries regarding these benefits, please contact Express Scripts at 1-800-950-2662, or visit their website at [www.express-scripts.com](http://www.express-scripts.com). You may also contact the Employee Benefits Unit, Department of Civil Service/Human Resources, via e-mail at [ebu@suffolkcountyny.gov](mailto:ebu@suffolkcountyny.gov).

  
**JEFFREY W. SZABO**  
**Deputy County Executive & Chief of Staff**

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# Drug Quantity Management (DQM)

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### – Drug Quantity Management –

#### Overview

#### 1. What Is Drug Quantity Management?

Drug Quantity Management (DQM) is a program in your pharmacy benefit that's designed *to make the use of prescription drugs safer and more affordable*. It provides you with medicines you need for your good health and the health of your family, while making sure you receive them in the amount — or quantity — considered safe.

Certain medicines are included in this program. For these medicines, you can receive an amount to last you a certain number of days: For instance, the program could provide a maximum of 90 pills for a maintenance medicine you take once a day (90 pills for 90 day supply). This gives you the right amount to take *the daily dose considered safe and effective*, according to guidelines from the U.S Food & Drug Administration (FDA).

Drug Quantity Management also *helps save money in two different ways*. First, if your medicine is available in different strengths, sometimes you could take one dose of a higher strength instead of two or more of a lower strength – which saves money over time. For example:

You might be taking one 20 mg pill twice a day. For a three (3) month's supply, you need 180 pills. But Drug Quantity Management would provide just 90 pills at a time. Therefore, you would need to refill your prescription of the 20 mg pill every 45 days for one copayment.

With *your doctor's* approval, you could get a higher strength pill. For instance, you could take a 40 mg pill once a day (instead of two 20 mg pills). A three month's supply would last you 90 days – and *you would have just one copayment*.

Taking your prescribed dose in a higher strength pill also helps EMHP save, because your plan pays for fewer pills. By saving on drug costs, you will help to contain the rising cost of prescription drugs for everyone in your plan.

Secondly, the program also controls the cost of “extra” supplies that could go to waste in your medicine cabinet.

## 2. Who developed Your Drug Quantity Management program?

The program follows guidelines developed by the U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA). These guidelines recommend the maximum quantities considered safe for prescribing certain medicines.

The EMHP Drug Quantity Management program is based on FDA guidelines and other medical information. It will be managed by Express Scripts, the company that manages your pharmacy benefit.

## 3. What drugs are included in our program?

Your Drug Quantity Management program includes *drugs that could have safety issues for you* if the quantity is larger than the guidelines recommend. For instance, it includes drugs that aren't easily measured out, like nose sprays or inhalers.

*Drugs that come in several strengths* are also included. Again, if you can take fewer doses at a higher strength, you save because you pay fewer copayments – and your plan can save, too.

A list of drugs in EMHP's Drug Quantity Management program can be obtained by calling ESI at 1-800-950-2662 or by downloading it from their website at [www.express-scripts.com](http://www.express-scripts.com). We recommend that you show your doctor this list.

## How Drug Quantity Management Works

### 4. Why couldn't I get the amount of my medicine that was prescribed?

Here's what occurs at the pharmacy when a drug is included in your Drug Quantity Management program:

When you hand in your prescription, your pharmacist sees a note on the computer system indicating that your medicine isn't covered for the amount prescribed. This could mean:

- 1. You've asked for a refill too soon*; that is, you should still have medicine left from your last supply. Just ask your pharmacist when it will be time to get a refill.
- 2. OR your doctor wrote you a prescription for a quantity larger than your plan covers.*

If the quantity on your prescription is too large, here's what you can do:

- Have your pharmacist fill your prescription as it's written, for the amount that your plan covers. You pay the appropriate copayment. But you may need to get this prescription

filled more often – for instance, every 45 days instead of every 90 days – which means you pay more often.

- **OR** ask your pharmacist to call your doctor. They can discuss changing your prescription to a higher strength, when one is available. In most cases, if your doctor approves this change you have fewer copayments because you receive your medicine every 90 days.
- **OR** ask your pharmacist to contact your doctor about getting a “prior authorization.” That is, your doctor can call Express Scripts to request that you receive the original amount and strength he/she prescribed. During this call, your doctor and an Express Scripts representative may discuss how your medical problem requires medicine in larger quantities than your plan usually covers. They may consider safety issues about the amount of medicine you’re going to receive. And the Express Scripts representative will check your plan’s guidelines to see if your medicine can be covered for a larger quantity. Express Scripts’ Prior Authorization phone lines are open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, so a determination can be made right away.

## **5. Does this program deny me access to the medication I need?**

No. Your Drug Quantity Management program *provides you with prescription drugs you need, in quantities that follow your plan’s guidelines for safe, economical use.*

We encourage you to have your prescriptions filled according to the guidelines your plan uses. A list of the medicines included in your program is available. If you’d like a copy, a list of drugs in EMHP’s Drug Quantity Management program can be obtained by calling ESI at 1-800-950-2662 or by downloading it from their website at [www.express-scripts.com](http://www.express-scripts.com). We recommend that you show your doctor this list.

## **6. I need my prescription filled immediately. What can I do?**

Your pharmacist can fill your prescription as it’s written, for the quantity your plan covers. Remember, although you pay your plan’s copayment, the quantity you receive might not last 90 days.

**OR** you can ask your pharmacist to call your doctor about changing your prescription to a higher strength, if one is available. This way you could get a 90 day supply for the plan’s copayment.

**OR** you can ask your pharmacist to call your doctor about requesting a prior authorization. If your doctor is available, he/she can call the Express Scripts Prior Authorization phone line at 1-800-950-2662 right away for a determination.

## **7. What happens if my doctor's request for a prior authorization is denied?**

Your old prescription strength and quantity will be denied for a 90 day supply, but your prescription will be filled for only a 45 day supply for one copayment. You will be responsible for the additional copayments as a result of filling extra prescriptions. For example, your doctor writes a prescription for the drug omeprazole. The doctor writes the prescription for 10 mg to be taken twice a day for a 90 day supply (total of 180 pills). The DQM program only allows one pill per day for a 90 day supply (total of 90 pills). You can ask your doctor to change your prescription to the 20 mg strength to be taken once daily (90 pills). If the prior authorization is denied and your doctor will not change to the higher strength medication, you can continue to receive the lower dosage for one copayment, however, you will be given a 45 day supply under the plan. You will need to pay one copayment every 45 days rather than one copayment every 90 days for your medication.

If your doctor is willing to change your prescription to a higher strength of your medicine, if one is available, you can get a 90 day supply at a time and pay one copayment.

## **Mail Service and Drug Quantity Management**

### **8. I sent in a prescription for mail-order delivery, but I was contacted and told it's in a Drug Quantity Management program. What happens now?**

The Express Scripts Mail Service Pharmacy will try to contact your doctor to suggest either that the doctor 1) change your prescription to a higher strength or 2) ask for a prior authorization. If the Express Scripts Mail Service Pharmacy doesn't hear back from your doctor within two days, it will fill your prescription for the quantity covered by your plan. To make sure that your doctor responds timely to the ESI Mail Service Pharmacy, you may want to let your doctor know that the Mail Service Pharmacy will be calling.

If a higher strength isn't available, or your plan doesn't provide a prior authorization for a higher quantity, the Mail Service Pharmacy can fill your prescription for the quantity that your plan covers.