Time For An E-Full

A HIVer’s guide to finding the most consumer-friendly online pharmacy for filling your prescriptions.

May 1, 2000 By Rebecca Minnich

Internet shopping, the newest way to save time while spending money, has now arrived at your pharmacy. Why web it? Virtual drugstores offer such pluses as free, next-day delivery in nondescript packages, no line-waiting hassles and (sometimes) lower prices than the corner drugstore.

Below we review four of the consumer-friendliest online pharmacies that sell HIV meds. (Note: Because POZ and Community Prescription Service [CPS] have overlapping owners, we omitted the CPS website [www.prescript.com], which specializes in meds and supplements for HIVers.) Before ordering from any site, browse several and jot down which services are most important to you: Do you want only prescription drugs, or also vitamins, herbs, creams and beauty products? Online HIV-treatment information? The lowest prices?

Pricing info can be hard to come by online—we had to phone two companies to complete our survey, which found a pretty consistent pricing pattern. As sample comparisons, we list current prices for the two top-selling AIDS drugs, Viracept (270 pills, 250 mg each) and Combivir (100 pills, 350 mg each).

If your drug must be refrigerated, make sure that that shipping option is available (the following four all have it). And check for the VIPPS (Verified Internet Pharmacy Practice Site) seal, awarded to sites that apply and are found to be in compliance with all relevant state regulations. Once you’ve made your choice, just type in your doctor’s contact info, place your order and surrender to the power of cyberspace.

APP Specialty Pharmacy
www.especialtypharmacy.com
Specialties: HIV, organ transplants, dialysis
Products: Complete line of AIDS-related drugs, supplements and creams
User-friendliness: Awkward to navigate—most info only available through catalog that must be ordered
Prices: Viracept $576, Combivir $929; price list unavailable without registering and giving personal info

Human contact: Pharmacists on phone duty 24/7, customer service 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. weekdays via phone
HIV info: Very little; few links

CVS.Com
www.cvs.com
Specialties: National chain drugstore
Products: Complete line of drugs and supplements
User-friendliness: Easy to navigate, check inventory, review drug side effects and interactions, and place orders
Prices: Viracept $520, Combivir $881; price list freely available
Human contact: Questions to pharmacists only by e-mail after business hours; customer service available by phone 24/7
HIV info: No HIV section or links

PlanetRX
www.planetrx.com
Specialties: General online pharmacy
Products: Complete line of medical and nonmedical items
User-friendliness: Easy and fun to navigate. HIV e-center has menu of AIDS drugs (though incomplete); info available on dosages and warnings, but not comprehensive on interactions. Also lists supplements, condoms and home HIV tests. Updated daily
Prices: Viracept $512, Combivir $919; price list freely available
HIV info: Lots—articles, press releases, treatment info; many links to good sites
Human contact: Pharmacists available by e-mail—answers guaranteed within 24 hours; customer service 24/7 by phone

Priority Pharmacy
www.prioritypharmacy.com
Specialties: General online pharmacy
Products: Complete line of drugs and vitamins, some herbs
User-friendliness: Moderately easy to navigate
Prices: Viracept $539, Combivir $870 (both prices only available with $15 discount card); price list unavailable without registering and giving personal info
Human contact: Pharmacists on duty 24/7 via phone; customer service only available 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. EST by phone
HIV info: Virtually none; few HIV links

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