

Prescription Refill FAQ

What is the new policy at IPCA?

- We are charging a \$20 administrative fee for refilling prescriptions.
- This will start August 1, 2004
- This fee applies only to prescription refills that occur without a physician or nurse practitioner appointment. You will not be charged the administrative fee if you are given a prescription refills at an appointment with the doctor or nurse.
- The fee is \$20 regardless of how many prescriptions are filled.
- It is payable by cash, check, or credit card at the time that you pick up your prescriptions; if you use a credit card an additional processing fee raises the total payment to \$23.

Why am I being charged an administrative fee for prescription refills?

We are doing this to maintain your access to safe and efficient medication management services. We have developed a system that allows us to provide these services for patients taking tightly regulated narcotic and other medications. We want to continue providing these services, but we must ask our patients to bear a portion of the cost now. If we do not charge this fee, we will either have to discontinue prescribing medications for hundreds of patients or close our practice.

Why now? Why was I not charge this fee last year?

Malpractice insurance premiums have just increased significantly, this year. This affects specialty practices more than primary care practices, for now. We are looking for ways to continue our medical practice in the face of rising costs.

I thought my insurance companies payment and my co-pay covered all the costs of prescription refills.

The handling of narcotic prescriptions according to state and federal guidelines is expensive. Any clinic that does a lot of narcotic prescriptions has very high costs associated with this.

- Compared to the average primary care office, IPCA is taking care of many more patients who need potent and tightly regulated medication for their difficult pain problems.
- This means that we cannot see every patient receiving narcotic medications once a month. We have far too many patients to do this. We routinely see stable patients every three or four months but we must fill prescriptions monthly in between visits.
- The administrative fee goes to cover just a part of the cost of all the activity that goes on to fill your prescriptions in between clinic visits. Specifically, we have hired extra staff and purchased additional computer software to do this safely and efficiently, and to comply with state and federal guidelines for prescribing narcotic medications
 - Your insurance does not cover this unusual and additional service.
 - Do not blame your insurance company, there was no way insurance companies could have anticipated the current climate surrounding prescribing narcotic medications for chronic pain.

But my other doctors are not doing this.

Your primary care doctor is not doing this because he/she is not providing the same service as IPCA. Your primary care physician can prescribe pain medications for limited number of patients, but not for the large volume that a specialized pain practice like IPCA does. There are a few physicians who see a moderate number of patients every month for prescription refills. They are limited by the number of appointments available for follow up visits to a certain number of patients, and their practices have filled long-ago. In fact, several of these physicians have not been able to continue their practices, leaving a gap in medical services for people with pain. You might be interested to know that many of these physicians have dropped all insurance companies and require their patients to pay cash for each and every physician visit. We have not gone this far and we hope that we do not have to.