Transitioning to Adulthood: Understanding Durable Medical Equipment (DME) Supplies

Durable medical equipment (DME) includes items used for medical care that you cannot get at a local pharmacy. Types of supplies may include wound care, breathing support (tracheostomy, CPAP), ostomy, continence (catheters, diapers, pads), and diabetes tools (continuous glucose monitors, insulin pumps).

Getting DME Supplies

DME supplies come from special companies. You need to know what types of supplies you need and what your insurance covers.

1. Call your insurance provider to get a list of DME companies and their contact details. Your provider may help you choose a company, or you can research on your own.
2. Call a DME company and tell them what supplies you need. Share all items you need. Some companies only carry one type of supply. It may be easier to use one company for all supplies instead of using more than one.
3. Tell your healthcare provider which DME company you chose so they can send a prescription.
4. Most DME companies mail supplies each month. Ask if you need to request refills or if they send them on a set schedule. Some items may be sent in a 90-day supply.

Expect calls from the DME company. You need to answer or return calls so you can keep getting supplies.

Common Challenges and Tips

"I have a long list of DME companies and do not know how to choose"

- Most DME companies work in similar ways.
- Large companies such as Byram, EdgePark Medical, Comfort Medical, 180 Medical, and J and B carry many supply types.
- Call a few companies to find the best fit.
- If possible, try a local company such as SSM Health Janesville or UW Care Direct if they have what you need.

"I ordered a 90-day supply but now need a new product"

- Call the DME company. Unopened supplies may be returned.
- If you cannot return items, talk with your healthcare provider about timing.
- If you need the new product right away, ask your provider for a Letter of Medical Necessity for insurance coverage.
- You may donate the old supplies or save them for later use.

"I received a large bill and thought insurance would cover it"

- Talk with your DME company or healthcare provider about other supply options.
- Different codes may change the cost of a product.

“I received supplies that are different from what I used in the clinic or hospital”

- DME companies may send different products based on cost and stock.
- Most substitutes work well.
- Call your healthcare provider if you have questions about the product.

Supply Limits

Most DME supplies have monthly limits set by Medicare or Medicaid. Many private insurance plans follow these rules. If you need more than the monthly limit, ask your healthcare provider to send a Letter of Medical Necessity for extra supplies.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person’s health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 7/2026 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#8535