

Meijer stores to give free antibiotics

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Grand Rapids, Mich., retail chain Meijer Inc. has announced it will distribute free antibiotics to customers for colds and other ailments.

Meijer said the seven generic antibiotics, which are commonly prescribed to children for colds, ear infections, strep throat and other illnesses, would assist families dealing with health care and prescription drug costs, the Detroit Free Press reported Tuesday.

Fourteen-day supplies of the drugs -- amoxicillin, cephalexin, SMZ-TMP, ciprofloxacin, penicillin-VK, ampicillin and erythromycin -- will be given free of charge to any person with a prescription, regardless of insurance status, the retail chain said.

Meijer said about 500,000 of the medications, which generally cost between \$8 and \$30, are sold by the store every year. Meijer President Mark Murray said he expects the store to make back lost prescription revenues with the added traffic of new shoppers seeking to use the program.

The move follows announcements from Wal-Mart and Target retail chains that some generic drugs would be made available at their stores for \$4.

"Certainly Wal-Mart's move put this on the forefront," Murray said. "It's the nature of the business world -- to serve customers as well as we can."

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