

Patients with diabetes who use mail order pharmacy are less likely to visit ER's

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Patients with diabetes who received prescribed heart medications by mail were less likely to visit the emergency room than those patients who picked up prescriptions in person, according to a new Kaiser Permanente study published in the *American Journal of Managed Care*.

The study examined 17,217 adult Kaiser Permanente members with diabetes who were first prescribed [heart medications](#) in 2006 and followed them for 3 years. It found that [diabetes patients](#) under age 65 who used mail order pharmacy had significantly fewer [emergency room visits](#) for any cause than those who picked up prescriptions (33.8 percent vs. 40.2 percent, respectively).

This study is the first to examine the potential impacts of mail order pharmacy on patient safety and utilization, and explores the concern of patients experiencing adverse outcomes because they do not meet face-to-face with a pharmacist.

"Overall, we didn't see any safety concerns," said Julie A. Schmittdiel, PhD, research scientist with the Kaiser Permanente Division of Research and the study's lead author. "For the vast majority of people, mail order pharmacy works well."

Kaiser Permanente offers members the options of using its mail order pharmacy or picking up [prescriptions](#) at walk-in pharmacies located in Kaiser Permanente hospitals and outpatient medical buildings. Medications can be delivered by mail with free shipping; mail order

requests can be made by phone or online; and mail order copayments are often lower for the same supply as walk-in pharmacies.

The study did not look at possible reasons why the use of mail order pharmacies was associated with fewer [emergency room](#) visits, but researchers noted that further investigation may involve exploring factors such as patients having disabilities, time constraints or limited transportation.

This study is part of Kaiser Permanente's ongoing efforts to understand how mail order pharmacies can improve care. Schmittiel's previous studies have shown that patients who use mail order pharmacy have significantly better medication adherence and cholesterol management.

Provided by Kaiser Permanente

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