

Ask your pharmacist

What is a compounding pharmacy? | Matthew Murray, Shah Afshar R.Ph.

A compounding pharmacy specializes in creating, or compounding medications. Unlike most traditional pharmacies that purchase pre-packaged medications, a compounding pharmacy will purchase bulk chemicals and turn them into a form you can use. The art of compounding has largely been lost due to the ease of buying pre-packaged medications from large pharmaceutical corporations. The traditional pre-manufactured medications are the standard of care, as they are well tested and have proven to be effective. Although most people benefit from these traditional medications, there is still a need for compounded drugs. Compounding medicines gives people more options in treating their diseases.

There are many reasons that compounded medications are still needed. Changing dosage forms is the most common reason compounding pharmacists make medications. A dosage form is the way a medicine is given to a person, such as: capsules, creams, drops, rapid dissolving tablets, and injections to name a few. One example is when working with children; a compounding pharmacist can take a medicine that is only available as a tablet or capsule and form a flavored suspension so the child can drink their medicine. Another application for changing a dosage form is pain management. Many pain pills can be made into topical creams, which are absorbed into the skin and alleviate pain in a specific area. This allows pain relief where it's needed, but

avoids many of the unwanted side effects such as sedation and stomach irritation. Compounding pharmacies can also slow the release of many medications not available in a time-release form. For example, a compounding pharmacy could put melatonin, a commonly used over the counter sleep aid, in an extended release form. This allows the melatonin to work throughout the night. Veterinary medicine has also benefited from compounding. Tablets can be turned into a gel that can be applied to an animal's ear, to eliminate wrestling a pill down a sick animal's mouth. Many compounding pharmacies have flavors that animals enjoy such as beef, tuna, chicken, and peanut butter to entice those animals to take their medicine.

Compounding pharmacies can also create custom doses. When tablets aren't available in the dose that you need, a compounding pharmacist can create a custom tailored dose just for you. One example of this is with hormone and thyroid therapies; virtually any dose can be created and customized to your needs. Compounders also specialize in making available medications that are no longer made or aren't profitable for large companies to make. There are many uses for a compounding pharmacy. You could be surprised what they can do if you just ask. When your children or your pet won't swallow that pill, or you just can't seem to get the exact dose, keep a compounding pharmacy in mind.

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