Amazon is putting prescription drugs in vending machines

Amazon is adding vending machines stocked with prescription drugs to its One Medical clinics, allowing patients to pick up their medications immediately after their appointment. A wide range of common prescriptions will be available for kiosk collection, including antibiotics, inhalers, and blood pressure medication.

The company announced that the Amazon Pharmacy kiosks will be available at One Medical offices across Los Angeles starting in December, with plans to later expand to other locations. Amazon says the specific inventory for kiosks will vary based on the "prescribing patterns of each office location," and that they won't distribute controlled substances or medications that require refrigeration.

The vending machines aim to make it easier for people to collect essential meds without traveling to a dedicated pharmacy, helping to reduce delays and the number of prescriptions that never get filled. Patients can choose to have their provider send prescriptions to an Amazon Pharmacy for collection at in-office kiosks. These are then verified by one of the company's pharmacists, with patients able to check out using a QR code on the Amazon mobile app and collect their drugs "in minutes," according to the press release.

"We know that when patients have to make an extra trip to the pharmacy after seeing their doctor, many prescriptions never get filled," Amazon Pharmacy operations president Hannah McClellan said in the announcement. "By bringing the pharmacy

directly to the point of care, we’re removing a critical barrier and helping patients start their treatment when it matters most — right away.”

People who use the Amazon Pharmacy kiosks will also have access to phone and video consultations with the company’s pharmacy team to resolve queries about their medications, “just as they would at a traditional pharmacy counter,” said McClellan. This comes as brick and mortar pharmacies across the US struggle against growing competition and falling drug margins, with Rite Aid, CVS, and Walgreens locations having shuttered in recent years — reducing access to in-person prescription pick-ups.

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