



Brown Bagging for Specialty Medications

Brown bagging is a treatment delivery model where specialty medication is picked up by the patient or delivered to their front door. The patient is then responsible for storing and transporting the medication to the clinician's office for administration. These specialty medications treat patients with complex and chronic conditions, like certain cancers, digestive diseases, inflammatory conditions and respiratory conditions. Brown bagging introduces concerns about medication safety and treatment delays.

The Brown Bagging Model

Brown bagging is an alternative to the “buy-and-bill” model where the clinician assumes the risk of purchasing medications in bulk, allowing them to bill the insurer for the cost of administration.¹ Brown bagging shifts coverage from medical to pharmacy benefit, while impacting tailored treatment for individual patients. Brown bagging also impacts the clinician's ability to initiate treatment and alter ongoing maintenance doses.

The brown bagging model **shifts responsibility** onto the patient rather than the clinician.

New Responsibilities for Patients

The brown bagging model shifts responsibility onto the patient rather than the clinician for managing the medication before administration. Responsibilities include:



Providing a reliable mailing address for the medication delivery



Storing and caring for temperature-sensitive specialty medications



Transporting specialty medications to the clinician's office



Scheduling medication administration to align with medication delivery or pick up

How Brown Bagging Can Disrupt Care

Brown bagging can introduce risks that affect medication quality and treatment timeline.² Specialty medications are mostly temperature-sensitive, as improper storage poses risks to freezing or overheating. Delays in delivery and pickup can cause disruptions in treatment plans. Brown bagging reduces clinical flexibility when adjustments in medication dosage are needed to accommodate changes in a patient's health status. This model places a significant burden on patients managing their treatment plan. These risk factors can be costly to the patient's safety and overall health care system.

Policies should promote **safe, appropriate** specialty medication practices.

References

1. careviso. White Bagging vs Brown Bagging: What Specialty Pharma Should Know. Careviso.com. Published April 24, 2026. <https://www.careviso.com/news-events/white-bagging-vs-brown-bagging>
2. White and Brown Bagging Emerging Practices, Emerging Regulation. In: *National Association of Boards of Pharmacy*. 2018. https://nabp.pharmacy/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/White-Bagging-and-Brown-Bagging-Report-2018_Final-1.pdf
3. *White, Brown, Clear, and Gold Bagging* | AMCP.Org. Academy of Managed Care Pharmacy; 2024. <https://www.amcp.org/legislative-regulatory-position/white-brown-clear-and-gold-bagging>

Policy Solutions to Protect Patients

Policymakers should prohibit brown bagging requirements that shift medication management responsibilities onto patients and weaken the clinician-patient treatment planning process. Policies should promote safe, appropriate specialty medication practices with regulated oversight of medication handling and authenticity processes.³

These protections should prioritize patient safety by:

- **Reducing safety hazards** related to medication storage and transportation.
- **Preventing avoidable treatment delays** caused by delivery or handling issues.
- **Protecting patients** from high out-of-pocket costs.
- **Maintaining access to medications** that align with individualized care plans.



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