

Compounding a Solution!

What if you needed a medication that is only available orally but you can't swallow? What if your child is anemic but can't tolerate the taste of any oral liquid form of iron? Where do you turn? Head straight to the nearest compounding pharmacy! Compounding is a practice that dates back to the roots of pharmacy. It is the art and science of preparing customized medications for patients. In the practice of compounding, a pharmacist uses the raw chemical ingredients to prepare a medication product. Over the last seven decades, we have seen the role of pharmacy compounding change. In the 1930s and 1940s approximately 60% of all medication dispensed was compounded. With the introduction of mass-manufactured medications, the role of compounding within a pharmacy was much reduced. However, in the last two decades, we've seen an increased demand for compounded medications. Today, compounding pharmacies invest in state-of-the-art equipment and training, and use proven techniques to prepare individualized medication for our patients. Compounding pharmacies work closely with patients and physicians to determine the best solution for each patient's individual problems or needs.

Compounding pharmacists are problem solvers. In addition to the situations above, here are a few more examples of situations when compounding can be beneficial:

- 1) Allergies to dyes or fillers commonly found in tablets/capsules:
As pharmacists, we often encounter patients with allergies to dyes and fillers such as lactose. A compounding pharmacist can prepare the desired medication "from scratch" while avoiding the problem ingredients.
- 2) Currently available strengths of medications are not appropriate:
As humans, we are all unique and one-size DOES NOT fit all. Mass-manufactured products offer limited strengths of medications. Compounding pharmacists can prepare strengths of medication not currently offered.
- 3) Specific dosage form is not available:
If a patient is unable to swallow, a compounding pharmacist can prepare a medication in another dosage form such as a suppository, or transdermal cream that will allow absorption of the medication without taking it orally. Medications can also be compounded in lozenges (both hard-candy like and gummy-bear like) and in lollipops.
- 4) Medication is discontinued by the manufacturer:
Many times, medications become "non-profitable" for manufacturers and production will stop. This may happen even though the medication is very effective. Compounding pharmacists can usually obtain the discontinued raw ingredient and bring the product back into existence. This DOES NOT apply to medications that have been recalled due to safety issues.
- 5) Ugh! That tastes awful!
We parents have heard this one before. Compounding pharmacists can flavor liquid medications using a wide variety of flavors and sweeteners to mask the medication's original bad taste.
- 6) Medications need to be combined:
Compounding pharmacists can combine several medications into one dosage form to reduce the number of doses needed each day.

7) Veterinary Medicine:

Compounding pharmacists can prepare topical dosage forms or flavored medications to ease administration to pets. Topical dosage forms can be applied to an area that can't be reached and resultantly licked off. Pet-friendly flavors include liver, beef, and fish, just to name a few.

Now that you understand what Pharmacy Compounding means and understand some situations when compounding can be beneficial, let's explore some other questions you may have:

1. Is there a local pharmacy that offers pharmacy compounding? Yes! Tiger Town Pharmacy in Commerce, GA offers compounding services as well as traditional dispensing. Tiger Town boasts a state-of-the-art compounding laboratory accompanied by a well-trained and educated staff.
2. Is compounding pharmacy safe and legal? Yes. Just as all pharmacies, compounding pharmacies are regulated and inspected by the state board of pharmacy. Modern equipment combined with proven techniques is used to prepare top quality medications.
3. Do compounded medications require a prescription from my doctor? Yes. Most compounded medications are a prescription medication, which means your doctor must prescribe them. However, at Tiger Town Pharmacy, we will combine with the patient and physician to form a team working to determine which compounded products best suit each individual patients needs.
4. Are compounded prescriptions covered by my prescription Insurance? To speak from experience, yes. At Tiger Town, we usually have success getting insurance companies to cover compounded prescriptions. We occasionally encounter a plan with no coverage for compounded medications, but these are usually the exception rather than the rule.
5. What kind of medications can be used for compounding? Almost anything within the imagination! Compounding pharmacists are problem-solvers. Our goal with every patient and physician consult is to help determine the best solution for that specific situation. Almost any medication-related problem can be solved with compounding, so the possibilities are endless. However, just for curiosity's sake, here are examples of the most commonly dispensed compounded medications at Tiger Town Pharmacy:

- Transdermal Creams for arthritis pain or nerve pain. These creams are prepared in a special base that forces the medication through the skin. They are usually applied at the joint or area of pain. These preparations provide exceptional pain relief without the stomach risks common to many arthritis medications.

- Topical Creams for natural hormone replacement in women. These preparations allow us to supplement hormones that are deficient in a woman's (or man's) body with a medication that is bio-identical to human hormones. That means that the raw chemical used is identical to the human hormone. This eliminates many of the unwanted side-effects that traditional, mass-produced hormone replacement products carry. Along similar lines, many different dosage forms of progesterone, including vaginal suppositories, can be compounded to promote fertility and maintain pregnancy.

- Nicotine Lollipops for smoking cessation. Yes, at Tiger Town Pharmacy, we can compound many medications into tasty lollipops. The most commonly compounded lollipop contains nicotine. The fast peak in nicotine blood levels achieved from using

nicotine lollipops more closely simulates smoking a cigarette. The use of a lollipop also accomplishes the need many people have to keep their hands busy.

- Oral Mouth Ulcer Bandage. A powder that contains medications to promote healing as well as control pain can be placed in a special powder puffer and used to puff onto mouth ulcers inside the mouth. The base powder in this combination creates a resin and seals off the ulcer. The medication in the powder promotes healing while the powder resin bandage protects the ulcer from further irritation due to exposure to food/drink.

- Rectal Rocket. Yes, this is a real, legitimate dosage form. Any patient who has suffered through a severe case of hemorrhoids can attest to the pain. Rectal rockets are an unusually shaped suppository (think of a large golf tee). Medications can be added to the suppository to shrink the hemorrhoid and promote healing. The suppository is inserted into the rectum similarly to other suppositories. The one major difference is that the shape of the rectal rocket allows the large end of the suppository to remain outside the rectal cavity. This unique feature exposes both internal and external hemorrhoids to the healing medication. Talk about killing two birds with one stone. Most times, one or two treatments will provide extended relief.

- Transdermal gel for nausea. This gel is applied to the wrists for immediate relief of nausea. No pill, no suppository. This dosage form is used for patients with vomiting or in children (or adults) that can't face the suppository option.

- Liquid medications for reflux in children. Most medications used to treat gastrointestinal reflux in children are not commercially available in a liquid form. Liquid forms of these medications can be compounded and flavored according to the child's preferences.

As you can see, pharmacy compounding can exponentially increase your medication options. At Tiger Town Pharmacy, our staff is rewarded daily as we witness the amazing and exciting results that compounding offers our patients. For any questions regarding the impact that compounding pharmacy may have on your life, come in and consult with a member of our team.