



9 Things You're Probably Paying Too Much for at the Drugstore

Here's why some pharmacy purchases are a prescription for overspending.

The drugstore may be the most convenient place in the neighborhood to buy health and beauty items on the way home or pick up cold medicine when you're down with the flu. However, just because the drugstore has nearly everything you might need doesn't mean you should shop every aisle.

In fact, you'll pay more for many items and products at the drugstore than you'd pay if you bought them somewhere else. So, what kinds of things have you been overspending on at the drugstore?

1. Travel size health & beauty items

Those little bottles of shampoo sure are cute, and they'll pass the carry-on test at the airport, but what a waste of money. Why pay \$2 to \$6 for three ounces of shampoo, mouthwash or other product when you can buy a much larger size of the same brand for a few dollars more and get more use from it?

Instead of blowing money on trial sizes, buy empty travel bottles that you can use repeatedly and fill them with products you already have or will use after your trip. Or look for travel-size containers you may already have on hand, including empty ones for other products that you can wash and reuse.

2. Greeting cards, gift bags and wrapping paper

Most drugstores have a vast selection of greeting cards, so they seem like obvious places to buy a birthday, thank you or Mother's Day card. However, drugstore greeting cards are usually pricey.

Before you slap down \$6 for a greeting card at the drugstore, check prices on cards at the grocery store. For the lowest prices, buy greeting cards, wrapping paper, and gift bags at a dollar store instead.

3. Office and school supplies

If you're overcome with a sudden urge to write a manifesto in an overpriced spiral notebook, go ahead and buy it at the drugstore. Otherwise, purchase notebooks, pens, ink cartridges, legal pads and paper at an office supply store, a dollar store or big-box retailer, where you can usually buy those products for a reasonable price.

4. Cleaning supplies

You can almost always find cleaning products and supplies, along with laundry detergent and fabric softener at the drugstore. With some cleaning items, however, you'll pay nearly double for the convenience of grabbing them from a drugstore shelf. Spending a few bucks more when you're in a hurry may not seem like a big deal, but it adds up over time when trying to save money.

5. Air freshener or disinfectant

Unless the house reeks so badly that you must spritz air freshener in every room right now, take time to shop at retail chain stores or a dollar store for a better price on air fresheners.

You may even be able to buy a two-pack of air freshener or disinfectant at a big-box retailer or dollar store for half the price (or less) than the cost of one of those items at the drugstore.

6. Pet supplies

While you may be able to find the occasional fleece throw on sale at the drugstore, that's one of the few pet-related products that can be a good deal at the drugstore. Cat litter is crazy expensive, and so is cat and dog food.

Why pay high prices for a limited drugstore selection when there is an abundance of online pet supply websites? Some will even deliver products to your door for less than you'd spend lugging that box of cat litter to the drugstore checkout if you stock up to avoid shipping costs. You can also buy pet supplies for less at a local pet store or big-box retailer.

7. Light bulbs

Unless the only light bulb in your home fizzled during the last 50 pages of a compelling novel, buying light bulbs at the drugstore is a money-waster. For the best price on light bulbs, shop online or at big-box, hardware or home improvement stores.

8. Food

If you buy groceries at the drugstore, you're spending much more than you'd spend at the grocery store. While you may find the occasional can of tuna or another product on sale, drugstores are notorious for high-priced food items.

Make a list before you hit the grocery store next time to avoid overspending on last-minute trips for coffee, soup, bread, or snacks at the corner drugstore.

9. Prescriptions

Don't assume that your drugstore has the best price on prescription drugs. Prices among chains vary, and you may find lower prices at supermarkets or retailers such as Costco or Walmart. Comparison shop, and you may be surprised at price differences for the same drug and quantity.