

The Case for Pill Splitting
Doc, it just makes sense!

One common sense method that helps preserve Medical Assistance pharmacy benefits for our state's most needy citizens is the use of half-tablets where appropriate. Many drugs are priced such that a higher dose costs the same as a lower dose so for those taking the lower dose simply splitting the higher dose pill results in essentially a "half price" or "buy one get one free" discount. Many Medicare and self-pay patients are already very familiar with this concept and routinely split pills that are safe to do so under the advice of their physician.

Unison has implemented a Voluntary Pill Splitting Program in concert with hundreds of pharmacies throughout PA in order to ensure safe and appropriate splitting and to maximize the stewardship of the funds available for the medical assistance drug benefit. However, this Voluntary Pill Splitting Program will only succeed with the help and support from our practitioner network and our contracted pharmacies.

We are asking you, the physician or mid-level practitioner to routinely order half-tablets of the following drugs where you have deemed it appropriate to do so and we also ask our participating pharmacies to be diligent about providing pill splitting services for our members: There are now four drugs eligible for splitting:

✓ RISPERDAL (risperidone)	<u>(1/2) 4mg</u> for 2mg, <u>(1/2) 2mg</u> for 1mg, <u>(1/2) 1mg</u> for 0.5mg, and <u>(1/2) 0.5mg</u> for 0.25mg
✓ LAMICTAL (lamotrigine)	<u>(1/2) 200mg</u> for 100mg, <u>(1/2) 150 mg</u> for 75mg, and <u>(1/2) 100 mg</u> for 50mg (All Scored Tablets)
✓ ABILIFY (aripiprazole)	<u>(1/2) 30mg</u> for 15mg, <u>(1/2) 20mg</u> for 10mg, and <u>(1/2) 10mg</u> for 5mg
✓ TOPAMAX (topiramate)	<u>(1/2) 200mg</u> for 100mg and <u>(1/2) 100mg</u> for 50mg

- Unison compensates specially contracted pharmacists to split these pills for your Unison patients to assure that the split is conducted safely and professionally
- The contracted pharmacists perform the professional services related to half-tablet dispensing; including any necessary physician/prescriber interface, patient education & counseling, and performing the splitting in the appropriate setting.
- The Program is entirely voluntary; pill-splitting occurs only when the patient, pharmacist and physician/prescriber concur that pill splitting is safe and acceptable.
- The Program operates under consent of DPW
- Pill splitting is backed by a scientific study conducted at Stanford University Medical Center by Randall Stafford, M.D., PhD. Our program is strictly limited to pills such as those identified in the study with a wide therapeutic window, not enteric-coated, not slow released and otherwise have physical characteristics that lend them to split cleanly.
- Pill splitting is routinely endorsed by AARP. In fact their adviser on the wise use of medications, William H. Thomas, M.D. promotes pill splitting in AARP Magazine.
- Pill Splitting saves state and federal tax dollars and helps to preserve the medical assistance pharmacy benefit. This is especially important concerning behavioral health medications which are both expensive and increasing in utilization.
- Pill Splitting is routinely practiced by the VA and as one VA physician aptly put it: "If pill splitting is good enough for our military heroes it ought to be good enough for all other Americans".
- Requires very little work by the physician. When the prescriber orders a half-tablet Rx for the above drugs or responds to a call from a pharmacist, no additional paperwork is necessary, the pharmacist will do the rest
- The program is voluntary and free from mandates or punitive measures.
- We have a dedicated employee to help you should you have any questions about the administration of the program (including pharmacist enrollment). Deanna Whetsel can be reached Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. by telephone at 412-349-6177.

Stewardship of the available funding for the Medical Assistance population is an important responsibility. Active and disciplined endorsement in support of this Voluntary Pill Splitting Program is ethically sound and fiscally prudent. Please help by routinely ordering half-tablets of the above eligible drugs.