

Owning your pharmacy:

What's the timeline for opening?

This is part 5 of a 6-part series focused on how to get started opening a new pharmacy.

To successfully launch a pharmacy, you certainly need a business plan, research about locations, customers and financial documents, but more importantly, you'll need a **calendar** and a **timeline**.

Without careful planning, you could arrive at your planned opening without all of the permits and licenses, inventory, trained staff and marketing needed to attract, serve and impress customers.

Key Timeline Considerations

Create a timeline that considers the time and money needed for:

- **Structure.** Whether you are building from the ground up, remodeling, updating equipment, installing alarms or any combination of those, you need time to research requirements and complete the work and paperwork, from permitting to insurance.

Well before the first nail is driven, you need to plan not only how you want the pharmacy to look, but how to meet any state and local requirements as well for features such as counter length, controlled medication storage, even restrooms.

Each situation is unique. For example, if your pharmacy will be in a historic district, you may need review time for an additional committee. If you want the work done during a building boom, the contractor may not be able to fit your project in immediately.

Category	Time Required	Estimated Cost
Structure	4-6 weeks	\$75,000+

- **Licensing.** If you are buying a pharmacy, some states will allow working under a power of attorney from the previous owner, but others will require you to have a state license ready to be issued the day you close the deal.

In some states you'll need to apply for a controlled substance permit before notifying the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency of the change in ownership. Will you apply for a new NPI/NCPDP or keep the existing? You'll need up-to-date records for the National Provider Identifier and National Council for Prescription Drug Programs Provider Identification.

Does your state require an inspection before you can open? If so, you'll need to figure out when the other work will be done so you can schedule the inspector's visit.

You'll also need to work with your wholesaler and Pharmacy Services Administrative Organization (PSAO) for smooth onboarding and transitions.

Category	Time Required	Estimated Cost
Licensing	30-60 days	\$2,500+

- **Staffing & stocking.** Even if you are buying a pharmacy and plan to keep the existing staff, you'll want to train them to the standards you expect. Before the first customer walks in the door, you want the staff to know how to use any equipment, new procedures and how to deliver great service, even if they must tell customers your pharmacy isn't in their network. Also, you want to completely stock the store. Pay attention to your OTC area, it has the highest gross margin of anything in your store.

Category	Time Required	Estimated Cost
Staffing & Stocking	2-3 weeks	\$45,000+ in inventory

- **Contracting.** While working on contracts, which can take several months, you might have a soft opening. For example, you could operate with reduced hours and only accept cash.

However, if you are in or near a Health Care Fraud Prevention and Enforcement Action Team (HEAT) zone, with concentrated enforcement to combat Medicare fraud, you could face additional hurdles and delays to joining payer networks.

Category	Time Required	Estimated Cost
Contracting	3-6 months	\$4,500 in PBM fees and rent

- **Marketing.** Your grand opening should be grand. A soft opening of several weeks can help prime the pump with customer flow. Visiting providers to describe what you are offering and how you can help their patients is a key part of marketing, so plan to devote a few weeks to that effort before you open.

Finally, work with your local Chamber of Commerce and other business groups on a grand opening celebration. In advertisements and local media interviews highlight what you want prospective customers to know. Make your brand known and communicate how what you are offering is different or better than what is currently being offered in the community.

Don't skimp on the grand opening or the ongoing marketing budget. Make sure marketing expenses are included in your financial planning.

Category	Time Required	Estimated Cost
Marketing	1 month	\$5,000-\$10,000

Once you've lined up everything on your calendar, you'll be ready to open your doors to customers.

Putting all the pieces together can feel like solving a 3D puzzle, with lots of things to consider and timelines that may overlap.

While this may be your first pharmacy opening or an ownership transfer, [RxOwnership](#)® advisors have been through the process thousands of times. They provide confidential, no-fee consultations covering every step along the way in building or buying a pharmacy, all the way through your opening. They know what a realistic timeline looks like and can help you think through all the essential details.

Make the first appointment on your calendar by [contacting RxOwnership](#) today to ask all your questions, with no risk or obligation.

Follow RxOwnership on [Twitter](#) or [LinkedIn](#) - and check out our new [Pharmacy Insights](#) short video series — to stay on top of industry news and what pharmacy owners need to know.

Sincerely,

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