

Step Therapy

What You Need to Know



Q. What is step therapy?

A. Step therapy is a clinical program that only applies to certain types of prescription medications. With step therapy, members will receive benefits for drugs subject to step therapy only after first trying alternative medications which have been determined to be safe, effective and less costly. In cases where alternative drugs are not appropriate for you to use, your physician can request an exception to the step therapy program.

Q. Why does my prescription benefit include step therapy?

A. Step therapy programs help manage the rising cost of prescription drugs, and the overall cost of health care. A “step” approach encourages the safe, cost-effective use of medication by first trying lower-cost medications whenever appropriate.

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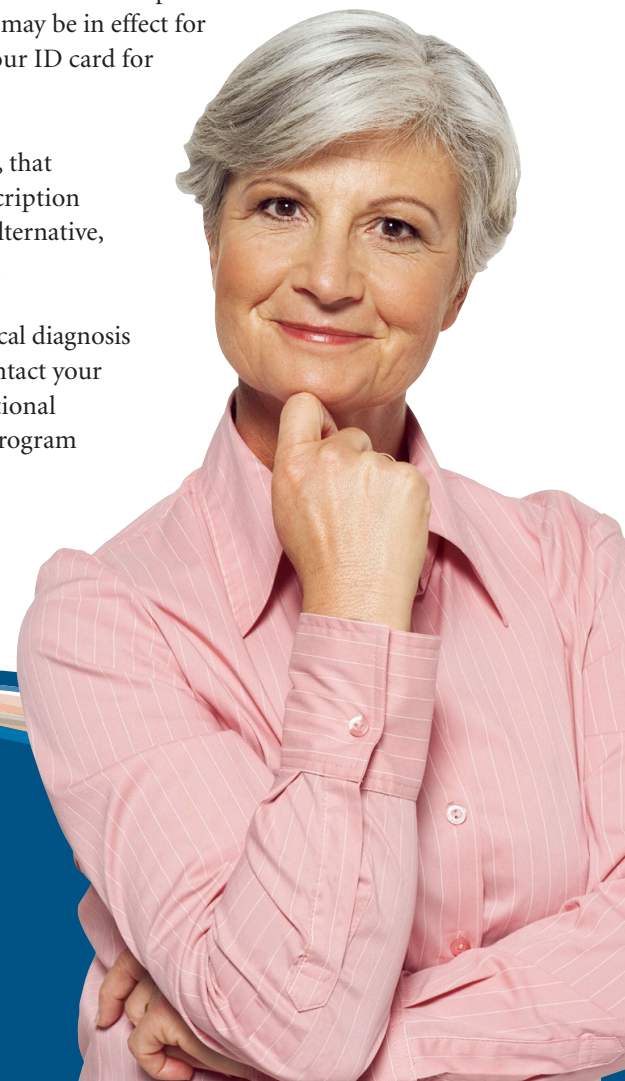
Q. How will step therapy affect me?

A. The vast majority of medications covered under your pharmacy benefit are not included in a step therapy program. Depending upon your specific benefit plan, a step therapy program may be in effect for one or more prescription drugs. Call the Customer Service number on the back of your ID card for more details.

When you present a prescription to the pharmacist for a drug subject to step therapy, that prescription will be immediately and automatically checked against your recent prescription claims history. If the available prescription history shows that you have already tried alternative, or first-line, drugs, your prescription may be automatically approved at the pharmacy.

In some instances, there may be no record of you receiving a first-line therapy, or medical diagnosis information may be needed. In these situations your pharmacist will advise you to contact your doctor. A toll-free phone number will be provided for your physician to call for additional information. However, the easiest way for you and your physician to obtain detailed program information and forms is by visiting the Provider section at bcbstx.com.

If you are prescribed a drug that is subject to step therapy, and believe that you have no pharmacy claims record of receiving a first-line drug, you may want to discuss other treatment options with your doctor to avoid any delay in your treatment.



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Q. How are medications selected for the step therapy program?

A. A team of physicians and pharmacists reviews categories of medications that are potentially over-prescribed and where more cost-effective alternative medications are available. The team recommends that specific drugs be added to the step therapy program list whenever safe and clinically sound therapeutic options are available.

Q. What medications are included in the step therapy program?

A. Examples of drug categories that may be included in the step therapy program and sample medications include*†:

- Antidepressants: brand name selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors, such as Lexapro, Zoloft
- COX-2 inhibitors: Celebrex
- Insomnia: Ambien, Ambien CR, Edluar, Lunesta, Rozerem, Sonata, Zolpimist
- Leukotriene inhibitors: Singulair
- Lipid management: Lipitor, Zetia
- Proton pump inhibitors: AcipHex, Dexilant, Zegerid
- Rheumatoid arthritis/psoriasis: Amevive, Kineret, Raptiva, Simponi
- Select high blood pressure medications, including the ARBs (Atacand, Avapro, Benicar, Cozaar (brand), Diovan, Micardis, Teveten), the ARB combination products, and Tekturna



If the available prescription history shows that you have already tried alternative, or first-line, drugs, your prescription may be automatically approved at the pharmacy.

†Additional categories may be added and the program may change from time to time.

*Third-party brand names are the property of their respective owners.