

# Step Therapy

Managing your health and saving money. A step-by-step guide.



## What is Step Therapy?

Drug benefit plans face constant cost pressures from the addition of new, more expensive medications. Step Therapy helps manage healthcare costs for conditions such as high blood pressure and diabetes by prioritizing cost-effective treatment options. This approach helps customers access the medications they need without incurring higher costs, stabilizing expenses and maximizing their drug benefits.

The Step Therapy program is designed to ensure patients receive safe, effective, and affordable medications. It categorizes treatments into three steps, starting with lower-cost, first-line drugs. If these initial treatments prove ineffective, patients can progress to more expensive options in subsequent steps.

### Key Benefits of Step Therapy

Our partner, *Express Scripts Canada* (ESC) has a team of pharmacists who review and recommend drugs and drug categories for the Step Therapy program based on the latest medical literature, Health Canada research, test results, and approvals.

They separate drug options into first and second-step categories, with first-step options being more cost-effective. First and second-step drugs deliver the same health outcomes.

What's in it for you?



#### Lower Costs with Equal Health Benefits:

The Step Therapy program identifies lower-cost medications that offer equal benefits and recommends these as the first line of treatment.



#### Access to Required Medications:

It ensures that our customers continue to access necessary medications for longer, avoiding the higher costs often associated with brand-name alternatives.

#### Other Resources:

Please visit [www.gms.ca](http://www.gms.ca) to find the complete Step Therapy Drug List.



## How Does Step Therapy Work at the Pharmacy?

### STEP 1

#### Start with a first-step drug

- Your health care provider diagnoses you with a condition needing treatment.
- You're prescribed a first-step drug (cost-effective option), and "your claim is automatically approved and paid.

### STEP 2

#### If needed, you can qualify for a second-step drug

- If the first step drug doesn't deliver or stops delivering the desired health benefits, then you can try a more costly second step drug.
- You are seamlessly eligible for a second step drug at the pharmacy. The claim will automatically be paid at the terms as the first step drug. Please note actual out of pocket will be dependent on drug cost and plan design.

## Accessing Second-Step Drugs – Extra Steps

You may qualify for a second-step alternative treatment but may need to follow these additional steps:

1

### Proof of First-Step Drug Usage

If you have evidence that you've used the first-step drug, but it's not recorded in our system, contact our Customer Care Team at **1-800-667-3699**.

Please gather your proof, such as receipts or claims history, and have it ready by email or fax when contacting our center.

2

### Health-Related Reason for Second-Step Therapy

If you have a health-related reason for starting directly on a second-step therapy without initially trying a first-step option, you should collaborate with your physician to apply for prior authorization.

You'll need to obtain a note from your doctor detailing the medical reasons why a Step 1 drug is not suitable for your treatment.

**For further assistance or information on accessing second-step drugs, please reach out to our Customer Care Team at 1-800-667-3699**