



# Prior Authorization and **Step Therapy**

There are hundreds of different medications, and more are becoming available every day. Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan works to make sure you get the safest, most effective and most reasonably priced prescription drugs. Our pharmacists do this in many different ways. Prior authorization and step therapy are two of our tools.

## What is prior authorization?

BCBSM requires review of certain drugs before your plan will cover them, which is called prior authorization. This ensures that you have tried the preferred alternatives — drugs with a proven track record that may be better tolerated, less expensive or less likely to cause interactions — and the drug is being prescribed appropriately. If your doctor doesn't get prior authorization when required, your drug may not be covered. You should consult with your doctor about an alternative therapy in those cases.

## What is step therapy?

Under step therapy, the BCBSM pharmacy computer system performs an automated review of your drug history to determine whether you've tried the preferred alternatives first for your condition. This ensures all clinically sound and cost-effective treatment options are tried before more expensive drugs are prescribed. If your prescribed drug does not meet the step therapy criteria, it may not be covered. You should consult with your doctor about an alternative therapy.

## What kinds of drugs need prior authorization or step therapy?

- Drugs that have dangerous side effects or can be harmful when combined with other drugs
- Drugs that should only be used for certain health conditions
- Drugs that are often misused or abused
- Drugs that are prescribed when less expensive drugs might work better

## How do I find out if my prescription requires prior authorization?

BCBSM members can find out if a certain drug needs prior authorization or step therapy by logging into Member Secured Services on [bcbsm.com](http://bcbsm.com). You'll need to know the name, strength and dosage of your prescribed drug.

After you've logged in, under the *My Coverage* tab, click on *Medical*. In the left-hand column, click on *Prescription Drugs*, then click on *Price a drug and view additional benefit requirements*. This link will take you directly to the Express Scripts website and its Price a Medication tool. Simply follow the instructions, and you'll get an alert if the drug needs a coverage review — for either prior authorization or step therapy.

You also can check whether your drug requires a coverage review by asking your pharmacist or consulting the complete BCBSM drug list at [bcbsm.com/pharmacy](http://bcbsm.com/pharmacy).

## What should I do if my prescription needs prior authorization or step therapy?

If your drug needs approval or step therapy, you or your pharmacist will need to inform your doctor. Your doctor may instead prescribe another drug that doesn't require approval, or your doctor may contact our Pharmacy Help Desk to provide the required information and request a coverage review.



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