

# Important *Update*

## Medication access during COVID-19 pandemic

April 14, 2020

We are closely monitoring the effects of COVID-19 on the demand for prescription drugs. We are working closely with pharmacy partners to ensure our members have access to the medications they need, when they need them.

### **Following official direction**

Provincial pharmacy regulators across Canada have issued the directive to pharmacists to limit the supply of prescription medications to 30 days per fill, in an effort to help protect Canada's drug supply during these uncertain times. The Canadian Life and Health Insurance Association (CLHIA), of which we are a member, supports efforts to ensure Canadians will continue to have access to the drugs they need, when they need them. We respect the professional and clinical judgement of pharmacists to support the medication needs of our members during this challenging time.

We administer many different plan designs on behalf of plan sponsors. This temporary imposed pharmacy dispensing directive may result in some plan members having to pay additional pharmacy dispensing fees and/or copays per prescription. The sharing of these additional costs between members and employers will vary depending on the plan design selected and established in their benefit contract. As always, please let us know if you have questions or wish to make any changes to your plan design, otherwise, current plan contract provisions related to pharmacy fees and co-payments remain applicable.

Members who will face extreme hardship, and who are on long-term prescriptions with no expectation that their treatment will end, have the option of asking their pharmacist to consider an exception and dispense a larger quantity.

Employers and organizations are dealing with unprecedented financial challenges; we continue to monitor this situation closely to ensure the ongoing financial sustainability of health benefits plans and look forward to a time when these restrictions will no longer be applied.

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## **Protecting everyone's health**

In order to help keep pharmacists and their staff healthy, you are asked not to go to any pharmacy if you are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 (fever, new onset of cough or difficulty breathing), in the 14 days after the onset of symptoms or if you think you have been exposed to the virus.

As always, members should ensure their refills are up to date, not waiting to the last minute or until their prescription runs out before reordering.

To help minimize your social interactions, you can also consider receiving your prescriptions through home delivery service. Talk to your pharmacist about your options.

## **Renewal of Prior Authorization drugs**

Some medications – usually high cost specialty drugs – require prior authorization approval to ensure reimbursement.

We understand that for members currently on a drug requiring prior authorization, it may be difficult right now to obtain the required renewal information, such as updated tests or exams.

If you have a prior authorization set to renew between **March 1, 2020 to May 31, 2020**, we have extended your renewal period by **90 days from your current renewal date or until July 31, 2020, whichever comes first.**

Certain drugs, such as for Hepatitis C, are excluded from this extension.

This extension applies to prior authorization **renewals only**. All new prior authorization requests will continue to follow existing practices.