

What is Step Therapy?

Step Therapy is a process that requires the use of one or more first line agents before a medication which is part of a step therapy protocol can be utilized. The goal of step therapy is to ensure that safe and cost effective medications are used, based on recognized treatment guidelines and well documented clinical studies. As a patient, this means that in some instances you will need to try one or more medications which are considered first line before you are able to receive a "second step" medication through your pharmacy benefit plan.

How does Step Therapy work?

When you bring a prescription for a "second step" medication to the pharmacy, the pharmacist will submit the claim to your insurance. At this time, your medication history will be reviewed to evaluate whether or not you have fulfilled the requirements of the first step. If you have met the requirements, your insurance will automatically cover the prescription. If you have not met the requirements of the first step, you have three options. The first option is to fulfill the requirements of the first step. The second option is to ask your physician to contact your insurance to request coverage as a medical exception. The final option is to pay the cash price for the prescription.

What medications may be part of Step Therapy protocols?

Step Therapy protocols are in place for a variety of medications including COX-2 inhibitors, certain diabetes medications, proton pump inhibitors, non-sedating antihistamines, and leukotriene inhibitors. For a complete list of medications that are subject to Step Therapy protocols, you will need to speak to the customer service department about your specific pharmacy benefit plan.

What happens when a medication is medically necessary but it is a part of a Step Therapy protocol?

If it is medically necessary for you to receive a "second step" medication before any "first step" medications have been tried, your physician may contact PTI-NPS to request coverage of the medication as a medical exception.

How are Step Therapy protocols developed?

Your pharmacy benefit plan develops Step Therapy protocols for certain medications. Step Therapy protocols are reviewed by licensed clinical pharmacists and are intended to provide safe and cost-effective therapy to patients. These protocols are developed based on recognized treatment guidelines, side effect profiles, and cost.

Step Therapy Protocols

Protocols	Criteria
Angiotensin-Converting Enzyme Inhibitor (ACEI)	On-line authorization is given if the prescription claim history includes trial of at least one generic ACE inhibitor product within the previous specified days prior to the use of a single-source brand name prescription.
Antihistamines and OTC Non-Sedating Antihistamines	On-line authorization is given if the prescription claim history includes a trial of over the counter (OTC) loratadine or loratadine/pseudoephedrine within the previous specified days prior to the use of a single-source brand name prescription antihistamine.
Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitor (SSRI)	On-line authorization is given if the prescription claim history includes trial of at least one generic SSRI product within the previous specified days prior to the use of a single-source brand name prescription.
Proton Pump Inhibitors (PPI)	On-line authorization is given if the prescription claim history includes a trial of at least one generic PPI within the previous specified days prior to the use of a single-source brand name prescription.
Cox-2 Inhibitor	On-line authorization is given if the prescription claim history includes a trial of two different generic NSAIDS within the previous specified days.
Angiotensin II Receptor Antagonists (ARB)	On-line authorization is given if the prescription claim history includes trial of at least one ACE inhibitor product within the previous specified days.
Topical Immunomodulator	On-line authorization is given if the patient has tried one prescription topical corticosteroid in the previous specified days.
Generic Osteoporosis	On-line authorization is given if the prescription claim history includes trial of at least one generic osteoporotic product within the previous specified days prior to the use of a single-source brand name prescription.
Sedative Hypnotics	On-line authorization is given if the prescription claim history includes trial of at least one generic sedative/hypnotic product within the previous specified days prior to the use of a single-source brand name prescription.
Anti-Allergy Ophthalmic Agents	On-line authorization is given if the prescription claim history includes trial of at least one generic anti-allergy ophthalmic product within the previous specified days prior to the use of a single-source brand name prescription.



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