

IMPORTANT CHANGES TO YOUR ASEBP PLAN

On September 1, 2016, ASEBP implemented a change to the benefit plan that impacts prescription medication coverage levels for drugs prescribed to treat stomach hyperacidity, high blood pressure, pain/inflammation management and migraines. ASEBP also introduced a maintenance medication program to encourage efficient dispensing for those receiving medications for chronic health conditions or as an ongoing prescription managed on a long term basis. Read on to find answers to some commonly asked questions about these programs and how they may impact you.

THERAPEUTIC ALTERNATIVE REFERENCE PRICING (TARP)

What is TARP?

The Therapeutic Alternative Reference Pricing (TARP) policy encourages cost-effective prescribing for common medical conditions. TARP drugs that are grouped together have similar active ingredients used to treat the same medical condition and are proven equally safe and effective. All the drugs still remain covered by ASEBP. The extent to which they are covered has changed and will be referred to the reference product in that therapeutic class.

The four therapeutic classes for the TARP policy are:

- Stomach hyperacidity
- High blood pressure
- Pain/inflammation management (non-narcotic)
- Migraines

Where can I find out if my medication is affected by TARP?

ASEBP's drug inquiry tool (accessible through your My ASEBP account: www.asebp.ab.ca/MyASEBP/) can tell you which drugs are reference medications under TARP. Have a look at the tool prior to visiting your doctor, pharmacist or other licenced health care provider so you'll be better positioned to talk about your options.

Is it safe to switch to a TARP medication?

Therapeutic alternatives are chosen based on scientific evidence, and international studies show the alternatives are equally safe and effective in all but rare instances, for medical reasons. All the reference medications are approved for use by Health Canada and meet all medical and safety requirements. Millions of people worldwide take these drugs.

Questions?

Specific questions regarding your prescribed medications should be directed to your doctor or pharmacist. Visit the ASEBP website at www.asebp.ca and click on the Rx Benefits tab, or contact an ASEBP benefit specialist at benefits@asebp.ca or 1-877-743-4786 for general questions about the TARP policy and processes or the maintenance medication program.



Does ASEBP limit the medications my health care provider can prescribe?

No. The TARP policy does not prevent your doctor or other licenced health care providers from prescribing any specific drug, however, there may be financial implications for you. The program is intended to encourage health care providers to prescribe a less costly and equally effective medication unless there is a medical reason why you need one of the non-TARP drugs.

What if I can't take the TARP drug for medical reasons?

If you aren't able to take the TARP drug for medical reasons (e.g. you have an allergy) your doctor, pharmacist (those accredited with additional prescribing authority) or other licenced health care providers can choose to submit a drug special authorization request on your behalf. Your health care provider has easy access to the necessary special authorization form. To avoid delays, please ensure your physician indicates pricing authorization and the name of the drug on the form. If approved, you will receive full coverage (within the limits of your plan) for the medication. You will receive a decision on the authorization request within five business days.

If you do choose to pay out-of-pocket for your prescription before receiving approval for your special authorization request, note that, if approved, the authorization will take effect on the first day of the month in which the approval was granted (not the date the prescription was filled or claim was made). You may then submit your claim to ASEBP either online (accessible through your My ASEBP account: www.asebp.ab.ca/MyASEBP/) or by mail for reimbursement.

What if I want to stay on my current medication regardless of the cost? Do I have a choice?

Yes, the choice is yours. You may choose to stay on your current drug even if it will not be fully covered by ASEBP under the TARP model. Note that ASEBP pays up to the cost of the TARP medication, so you will be responsible for covering the difference, which could vary significantly in cost, depending on the drug. As a reminder, any amount that you pay out-of-pocket for a medication would be an eligible Health Spending Account (HSA) expense. Note: The TARP policy does not address dispensing fees, only the actual drug cost.

Why was this change made to the ASEBP plan?

As stewards for your private, not-for-profit health and welfare trust, ASEBP Trustees are constantly striving to balance benefits and the cost of investing in the current and future health of covered members. As part of our rigorous annual plan review/design process, in 2015, ASEBP enlisted the support of several expert advisory groups including ASEBP's Health Benefits Advisory Panel, Aon Hewitt, Cubic Health and Alberta Health Services' Cardiovascular Heart & Stroke Strategic Clinical Network, to assist in identifying areas where design changes would slow the annual escalation of benefit costs for the plan, while still focusing on the health and quality of life of our members.

We believe implementation of the TARP policy enables clinicians to continue to effectively and safely treat the same conditions using medications that are proven therapeutically equivalent. This change also empowers you, as a covered member, to make decisions that support the long term sustainability of our valued benefit plan.

MAINTENANCE MEDICATION PROGRAM

What are maintenance medications?

Maintenance medications are often prescribed to patients with chronic health conditions or as an ongoing prescription that can be managed on a long term basis. In these cases, there is a low likelihood your dosage will change, and the medication is usually taken continuously over a long period of time.

Medications that fall within the following nine drug classes are considered maintenance medications by ASEBP. The following constitute the maintenance medication list.

Anti-hypertensive agents	Anti-diabetic agents	Anti-asthmatics/COPD
Anti-depressants	Contraceptives	Hormone replacement therapy
Anti-lipidemic agents	Thyroid agents	Medications for overactive bladder

What is the Maintenance Medication Program?

In addition to establishing nine categories of maintenance medications that form ASEBP's maintenance medication list, the program sets the number of dispensing fees allowed to be paid by your plan within a calendar year (January 1 – December 31) to a maximum of five. This change supports you to fill a three-month's supply of your medication at one time—lessening the risk of missing doses between fills—and provides you, as a member of the ASEBP plan, with a safe, simple and affordable way to help keep the plan comprehensive and sustainable over the long term.

What happens if I have to fill my prescription more than five times a year?

If you've already been filling the medication for 90-day periods, you will fall easily within the five dispensing fees and there will be no impact to you. If you have been getting your maintenance medication filled on a more frequent basis, you may wish to begin asking for a 90 or 100-day supply (depending on packaging from the manufacturer) now to ensure you fall within the five allowable dispensing fees.

If you choose to have each of your maintenance medication prescriptions filled more than five times within the year, after your fifth prescription fill, while the drug will continue to be covered by your plan, you will be responsible to pay the dispensing fee out-of-pocket. Your pharmacy is notified at the time of your prescription fill that you have a limited number of dispensing fee events per calendar year. This information is provided to enable you to take appropriate action to avoid additional out of pocket expenses. Note that in Alberta, dispensing fees (per prescription fill) can be up to \$12.30. As a reminder, any amount that you pay out-of-pocket for a dispensing fee would be an eligible HSA expense.

What if I have a medication on the list that I have to pick up more often than five times a year?

ASEBP understands that certain maintenance medications must be dispensed more often due to specific medical needs. Please discuss options with your pharmacist.