

Alberta Health announces an important change to coverage for proton pump inhibitors under Alberta government sponsored programs

On October 1, 2016, Alberta government sponsored drug programs will introduce Maximum Allowable Cost (MAC) pricing for eligible proton pump inhibitors (PPI) with the MAC price based on the lowest cost PPI. Given the clinical evidence that all PPIs are therapeutically similar and equally effective in the majority of patients*, this change will ensure health dollars are spent wisely.

Choosing Wisely Canada, in partnership with the Canadian Medical Association, has patient information regarding the use of PPIs available online at www.choosingwiselycanada.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/GERD-EN-web.pdf.

MAC pricing will be applied as follows:

Active ingredient	LCA/MAC price	
LANSOPRAZOLE 15 MG	\$0.1204	MAC pricing has been applied based on the LCA price for Rabeprazole Sodium 1 X 10 mg enteric-coated tablet.
OMEPRazole 10 MG		
RABEPRAZOLE SODIUM 10 MG		
LANSOPRAZOLE 30 MG	\$0.1875	MAC pricing has been applied based on the LCA price for Pantoprazole Magnesium 1 X 40 mg enteric-coated tablet.
OMEPRazole 20 MG		
PANTOPRAZOLE MAGNESIUM 40 MG		
PANTOPRAZOLE SODIUM 40 MG		
RABEPRAZOLE SODIUM 20 MG		

Patients currently using a PPI that is not the MAC product will be granted a transition period until January 31, 2017, to have their prescription changed to pantoprazole magnesium or rabeprazole sodium, if appropriate.

New warning message

During the transition period, to assist pharmacy providers with the identification of claims for plan members that will be subject to MAC pricing, the **warning message WD = "drug subject to MAC pricing"** will be returned at time of adjudication.

Prescribers may continue to prescribe and/or plan members may continue to choose any brand name or generic variety of the PPI; however, effective February 1, 2017, Alberta government sponsored drug programs will only pay up to the MAC price and the plan member will be responsible for paying the difference. Pharmacists may choose to switch patients to the MAC priced PPI and submit for an adaptation fee; please refer to Benefact 446, April 2014 for specific details about adaptation.

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Special Authorization may be considered only when a plan member has experienced a significant allergic reaction or documented untoward therapeutic effect with the MAC referenced product.

The October 1, 2016 *Alberta Drug Benefit List (ADBL)* will be updated with the MAC pricing for the drugs affected by this new pricing to reflect the change to the price policy. Additional information can be accessed online at www.ab.bluecross.ca/dbl/publications.html.

To assist with communicating this change to your customers, we have attached a patient information sheet.

* As referenced in *COMPUS* volume 1, issue 1, March 2007 *Optimal Therapy* report (<https://www.cadth.ca/proton-pump-inhibitor-therapy>).

When you have questions:

For assistance with benefit or claim inquiries, please contact an Alberta Blue Cross Pharmacy Services Provider Relations contact centre representative at:

780-498-8370 (Edmonton and area) • **403-294-4041** (Calgary and area) • **1-800-361-9632** (toll free)
FAX 780-498-8406 (Edmonton and area) • **FAX 1-877-305-9911** (toll free)

Alberta Blue Cross offers online access to current Pharmacy Benefacts and supplemental claiming information to assist with the submission of your direct bill drug claims. Visit <https://www.ab.bluecross.ca/providers/pharmacy-home.php>



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Acid reflux medication coverage changes

Acid reflux medications (known as proton pump inhibitors) are prescription drugs that keep the stomach from making too much acid to treat gastroesophageal reflux disease and other acid-related disorders.

Beginning October 1, 2016, coverage for these medications is changing. Only the cost for the lowest price medications, which are the generic versions of Pariet (rabeprazole) and Tecta (pantoprazole magnesium) will be covered under the Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan.

- There are different types of proton pump inhibitors varying in price, but evidence shows all these medications are equally effective.

If you are currently prescribed a different acid reflux medication, you have a 4-month transition period to discuss these changes with your doctor or pharmacist and switch to the generic drug. The transition period ends January 31, 2017. You may choose to still use a different acid reflux medication, but after the transition period, you will be required to pay the larger cost difference.

If you choose to use the lower cost medication, you will have a lower co-payment and could save you up to \$82.48 annually. If you choose to use a different medication, only the cost of the lowest cost medication will be applied, and your co-payments will be more.

- If you experience a severe allergic reaction to rabeprazole or pantoprazole magnesium, your doctor can request an exception by submitting a special authorization request form to Alberta Blue Cross.

It is important for you to know, when taking these medications, it is best to take the lowest dose possible and for the shortest time period. They are not intended for long-term use and are rarely needed for an extended time period.

- Read more about the use of these medications on the Choosing Wisely Canada web site at www.choosingwiselycanada.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/GERD-EN-web.pdf.

According to work done by the Canadian Agency for Drugs and Technologies in Health, all medications for acid reflux conditions are considered therapeutically similar and equally effective. However, the cost difference between medications can be significant. That is why the Alberta government is introducing this change. This change will help ensure our health dollars are spent wisely. This change will save money – for patients and for government.

Questions?

- If you have any questions about this change or your use of this medication, speak with your doctor or pharmacist.
- Contact Alberta Blue Cross for specific information about your drug plan at 1-800-661-6995.