



## STEP THERAPY

# Finding the most effective medicine for your health and your money.

Step therapy simply means making sure you get safe and proven-effective medicine for your condition – at the lowest possible cost to you and your plan sponsor.

In other words, it's how you can avoid paying more for the medicine you need.

### Here's how step therapy works

A panel of independent licensed physicians, pharmacists and other medical experts work with Express Scripts to recommend medicines for the step therapy program. Together, they review the most current research on thousands of prescription medicines tested and approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Then they determine the most appropriate medicines to include in the program. Medicines are then grouped in categories, or “steps.”

**First-line medicines** – These are the first step and are typically generic and lower-cost brand-name medicines. They are proven to be safe and effective, as well as affordable. In most cases, they provide the same health benefit as more expensive medicines, but at a lower cost.

**Second-line medicines** – These are the second and third steps and are typically brand-name medicines. They are best suited for the few patients who don't respond to first-line medicines. They're also the most expensive options.

On average, the cost of a generic drug is

**80-85%**  
lower than the  
brand-name product.<sup>1</sup>

## Here's how to start step therapy

### Step 1

The next time your doctor writes you a prescription, or if your current medicine qualifies, ask if a first-line generic medicine is right for you. Often, generic medicines have the same chemical makeup as their brand-name counterparts, and the same effect in the body, so the only real difference is cost.

### Step 2

Plans often cover second-line (more expensive) medicines if:

- You've tried the first-line medicine covered by your step therapy program, and you and your doctor feel that the medicine doesn't treat your condition effectively, OR
- You can't take a first-line medicine (for example, because of an allergy), OR
- Your doctor decides that you need a second-line medicine for medical reasons

## How do you find out if a first-line medicine is right for you?

Only your doctor can make that decision. Log in to your account at [express-scripts.com](http://express-scripts.com) or call Express Scripts at the number on your member ID card to find out if step therapy applies to the medicine your doctor prescribed. If it does, you can see a list of first-line alternatives. You can give that list to your doctor to choose the medicine your plan covers that best treats your condition.

## What happens if your doctor gives you a prescription that's not on the first-line list for your plan?

The first time you try to fill the prescription, whether it's in person or submitted to the Express Scripts Pharmacy<sup>SM</sup> to be delivered, your pharmacist should explain that step therapy requires you to try a first-line medicine before a second-line medicine is covered. Since only your doctor can change your current prescription, either you or your pharmacist need to speak with your doctor to request a first-line medicine that's covered by your plan. If you need your prescription right away, you may ask your pharmacist to fill a small supply until you can consult your doctor. NOTE: You might have to pay full price for this small supply.

---

**If you have questions about step therapy, or about anything else in your prescription plan, we're here to help. Just call the number on your member ID card, log in at [express-scripts.com](http://express-scripts.com) or download the Express Scripts mobile app.**



EXPRESS SCRIPTS<sup>®</sup>

<sup>1</sup>U.S. Food and Drug Administration, 2016  
© 2016 Express Scripts Holding Company. All Rights Reserved.  
16EME36275 CRP16\_2347 OT46713C