



# FACT SHEET

## How are decisions made about what drugs are covered by government?

Health Canada first assesses a new drug to determine its safety and whether the manufacturer can demonstrate that it works to treat specific symptoms or diseases.

Drugs are then assessed by the national Common Drug Review (CDR). The Common Drug Review considers comparative clinical and cost information to provide coverage recommendations to government drug plans.

Each province or territory then determines what drugs it will reimburse, criteria for use and who is eligible for coverage on their programs. In Alberta, the Expert Committee on Drug Evaluation and Therapeutics (Expert Committee) makes recommendations to the department and Minister for addition to the Drug Benefit List.

## How will the decision making process be improved?

The drug review process is being improved by:

- Establishing a new committee consisting of public members — The decision making process is being redesigned to include Albertans' perspective by allowing societal and ethical input on drug coverage recommendations through the public members' committee.
- Adopting guidelines for drug coverage decisions:
  - **Generic drugs** - 30 days
  - **Brand name drugs** - 120 days after completion of the Common Drug Review
  - **Products that require societal and ethical input** - 150 days
- Improving drug review procedures — A publicly accessible, transparent reporting system that provides information about the drugs being reviewed and the reasons for listing or not listing these drugs is being implemented.
- Simplifying the special authorization process — If there are specific concerns about the safety or appropriate use of selected drugs, government programs require “special authorization” approvals. Currently, only physicians can apply for these approvals. Pharmacists and other authorized prescribers will now also submit requests on behalf of their patients.
- Introducing a process for independent consideration — A process for individual consideration will be introduced to provide Albertans with a way to have drug coverage considered when they cannot tolerate or do not respond to standard therapy.

DRUG APPROVAL PROCESS

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## **When will these changes be introduced?**

These changes will be introduced after the legislative framework to support the Alberta Pharmaceutical Strategy is approved and implemented.

## **How can Albertans find out if a drug is covered by government?**

Not all prescription drugs available for use in Canada are covered by Alberta's drug benefit programs. The Drug Benefit List is updated quarterly and available at <https://www.ab.bluecross.ca/dbl/publications.html>.



## **For more information ...**

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**Alberta**