

PRIOR AUTHORIZATION DRUG PROGRAM

Protecting
employees' health
and the health of
your drug plan

A guide for benefit
plan administrators



THE VALUE OF THE EMPIRE LIFE PRIOR AUTHORIZATION PROGRAM

To help make sure employees and their eligible dependants* receive the most appropriate and cost-effective treatment, Empire Life requires some medications to be pre-approved for coverage through our Prior Authorization program. In this way, we ensure that:

- Employees will only be prescribed drugs that Health Canada has approved for their medical condition
- The provincial health plan or a drug manufacturer pays the cost of certain drugs before your benefits plan, where applicable
- Employees are prescribed clinically proven, less costly preferred drugs before more expensive treatments
- Doctors are given immediate access to the Express Scripts Canada team of pharmacists through our new and improved process, so preferred treatments can be put in place without delay

Prior Authorization does not prevent employees from filling prescriptions, but if a drug is on the list it may not be covered by your benefit plan if pre-approval is not obtained.

Employees can always pay for the drug out-of-pocket while awaiting approval. If the drug is approved, reimbursement will be applied retroactively to the date the request was submitted.

*For simplicity, from this point onwards, when we say "employees" or "employee" we are including their eligible dependants.



Helping us make sure the right drug is being used and is paid for by the right payer

WHO APPROVES PRIOR AUTHORIZATION DRUGS?

Express Scripts Canada is the pharmacy benefit manager for Empire Life. We have partnered with them to adjudicate our drug claims. Their team of pharmacists reviews employees' requests. They help us:

- Evaluate new prescription drugs as they become available in Canada
- Decide which drugs need to be covered by the Prior Authorization program
- Ensure approval guidelines are up-to-date and based on clinical evidence, cost, and Health Canada and medical association prescribing guidelines
- Carefully evaluate requests for approval, to assess whether:
 - the drug is approved by Health Canada for the medical condition;
 - the drug may be eligible for coverage under the employee's provincial health plan or a drug manufacturer program;
 - the employee has previously been prescribed a clinically proven, less costly preferred drug for their medical condition.

HOW PRIOR AUTHORIZATION WORKS

There are three ways to obtain pre-approval: at the doctor's office, by submitting a paper form, or at the pharmacy. The simplest and fastest method to obtain approval is for the doctor to call Express Scripts Canada.

At the doctor's office

1. When the doctor prescribes a new drug, the employee and doctor should consult the *Prior Authorization Drugs and Approval Guidelines* to see if the drug is on the list. To get a copy of this document, go to www.empire.ca, click "Group forms and resources" (at the right of the page), type in the document title and check the "plan member" box. Then click "Search."
2. If the drug is listed, the doctor should call Express Scripts Canada at 1 855 550 MEDS (6337) to complete the drug request over the phone. This only takes a few minutes.
3. The employee then proceeds to the pharmacy to have the prescription filled.

Submitting a request in paper form

Some doctors may choose to complete the Prior Authorization request form instead (it too is on www.empire.ca as noted above). The doctor or employee should mail or fax the completed form to Express Scripts Canada:

Fax	Mailing address
(905) 712-6329 or (855) 712-6329	Express Scripts Canada Clinical Services 2915 Argentia Road, Unit 7 Mississauga, ON L5N 8G6

It's important that all information requested be provided. Missing information can result in a delay or a declined request. A decision will be provided to the employee, usually within two to five business days.

At the pharmacy

If an employee is prescribed a medication covered under the Prior Authorization program and goes to the pharmacy before they have received pre-approval, here's what happens:

1. When the pharmacist enters the drug details in the computer system, they will receive a message asking them to call Express Scripts Canada.
2. Express Scripts Canada will review the Prior Authorization request with the pharmacist and gather the necessary information.
3. If the pharmacist has all the required information and the request is approved, the drug will be dispensed. There may be a short delay, up to 60 minutes, while the approval is updated in the system.
4. If the pharmacist does not have all the necessary information or if the request is declined, the employee will have to return to the doctor. The pharmacist can provide the employee with a Prior Authorization request form for this return visit, or the employee can print it from www.empire.ca.

Coordinating Coverage with Provincial Health Plans

When a drug on the Prior Authorization list is also covered by the employee's provincial health plan, we will direct the employee to the provincial plan. This approach adheres to the provisions in your benefit plan and reflects sound plan management.

Coverage Duration

When a drug is approved under the Prior Authorization program, approval is generally for 12 months from the date of the request.

New to Empire Life?

Generally, coverage for Prior Authorization drugs is grandfathered for up to one year once proof is provided that the drug was approved under the previous benefits plan. Employees taking a drug covered by your former benefits provider are advised to call the Customer Service Unit at 1 800 267-0215 or email us at group.csu@empire.ca to confirm their coverage has been grandfathered.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is Prior Authorization?

A: Prior Authorization is a program that requires pre-approval of selected drugs before they are eligible for coverage, to help make sure employees receive the most appropriate and cost-effective treatment.

Q: Why is Prior Authorization important?

A: Some medical conditions can be treated with a variety of drugs. Prior Authorization ensures that:

- Employees will only be reimbursed for drugs that Health Canada has approved for their medical condition;
- The provincial health plan or a drug manufacturer program pays the cost of certain drugs before your benefits plan, where applicable; or
- Employees are prescribed clinically proven, less costly preferred drugs before more expensive treatments.

Q: Which drugs require Prior Authorization?

A: Drugs that require pre-approval are those that:

- Could be prescribed for a condition for which the drug is not approved by Health Canada;
- Are not preferred treatments because less costly treatments are available that are proven to have the same clinical benefit; or
- May be eligible for coverage under the employee's provincial health plan or a drug manufacturer's program.

Medical conditions treated by Prior Authorization drugs include but are not limited to:

- Severe rheumatoid arthritis
- Multiple sclerosis
- Pulmonary artery hypertension
- Psoriasis
- Hepatitis C

A listing of Prior Authorization drugs is posted on our web site. From www.empire.ca click "Group forms and resources" (on the right), type "*Prior Authorization Drugs and Approval Criteria*" in the document title field, check the "plan member" box then click "Search." It is also on the Plan Administrator site, under Resources. You can also call our Customer Service Unit at 1 800 267 0215 to ask for a copy or email us at group.csu@empire.ca.

Q: Will the list of Prior Authorization drugs change?

A: Yes, we may update the drugs and approval guidelines from time to time, as new drugs become available in Canada and as we receive new clinical, safety and cost evidence.

Q: Who reviews Prior Authorization requests?

A: Express Scripts Canada is the Pharmacy Benefit Manager for Empire Life. We have partnered with them to adjudicate our drug claims, and it is their team of pharmacists that reviews requests. Approval guidelines are based on clinical evidence, Health Canada reports, and prescribing guidelines from medical associations such as the Canadian Rheumatology Association.

Q: How long does the approval process take?

A: If the review with Express Scripts Canada takes place at the doctor's office and all required information is provided, the process should take only a few minutes. If more time is needed to gather medical information, the process will normally be completed in two to five business days.

Q: Does Prior Authorization challenge the doctor's decision?

A: No. The Prior Authorization program does not prevent employees from obtaining the drug, but it may not be eligible under the plan if it is not approved by Health Canada for the employee's medical condition; if it is not the preferred treatment because there is a less expensive drug to try first that is clinically equivalent or better; or if the drug is covered under the employee's provincial health plan. Prior Authorization aims to make sure that the right drug is being used for the right patient, and paid for by the right payer.

Q: What happens if a prescription is taken to the pharmacy before pre-approval is obtained?

A: When the pharmacist enters the drug details into the computer system, they will receive a message to call Express Scripts Canada. Express Scripts Canada will review the Prior Authorization request with the pharmacist and gather the necessary information. If the pharmacist has all the required information and the request is approved, the drug will be dispensed. There may be a short delay, up to 60 minutes, while the approval is updated in the system. If the pharmacist does not have all the necessary information or if the request is declined, the employee will have to return to the doctor. The pharmacist can provide the employee with a Prior Authorization request form for this return visit, or the employee can print one from www.empire.ca.

Q: Can a prescription be filled while the employee is waiting for Express Scripts Canada to review the paper form request?

A: Yes. Prior Authorization does not prevent employees from filling prescriptions, but if a drug is on the list it will not be covered until approval is obtained. Employees can always pay for the drug out-of-pocket while awaiting approval. If the drug is approved, reimbursement will be applied retroactively to the date the request was submitted. The simplest and fastest method to obtain approval is for the doctor to call Express Scripts and get approval over the phone.

Q: Will the pharmacist/doctor be familiar with this process?

A: While most doctors know that group benefits plans have Prior Authorization programs, they likely will not be familiar with the details of the Empire Life program. For this reason, it's a good idea for employees to give a copy of the *Prior Authorization Drugs and Guidelines* and the *Prior Authorization Request* form to their doctor to put in their file so it's available for review—or at least be aware that their benefits plan has a Prior Authorization program and that information is available on www.empire.ca.

Q: Where can I get the listing of Prior Authorization drugs and the request form?

A: These documents are on www.empire.ca as well as on the Plan Administrator website. On www.empire.ca, click "Group forms and resources" (at the right of the page), type in the document title and check the "plan member" box. Then click "Search." For ease of reference, they are also under "Information for your employees" in the Resources section of the plan administrator website.

Q: Does an approval request need to be submitted every time an employee gets a prescription refilled?

A: No need! Most approvals are valid for one year. Details are included in the approval letter the employee will receive from Empire Life. The pharmacist will send the employee a reminder at the nine month mark, notifying them that the prescription will need to be renewed in three months. Once the approval period ends, the approval needs to be renewed.

Q: We just moved our benefits plan to Empire Life. What happens to Prior Authorizations that were approved by the former benefits provider?

A: Generally, coverage is grandfathered for up to one year once proof is provided that the drug was approved under the previous benefits plan. Still, it's a good idea for employees who are taking a Prior Authorization drug to call the Customer Service Unit at 800 267-0215 to confirm their coverage. They can also email us at group.csu@empire.ca.

Q: How does an employee obtain approval for a Prior Authorization drug?

A: There are three ways: at the doctor's office, by submitting a paper form for approval, or at the pharmacy.

At the doctor's office

1. When the doctor prescribes a new drug, the employee and doctor should consult the *Prior Authorization Drugs and Approval Guidelines* to see if the drug is on the list. To access this document, go to www.empire.ca, click "Group forms and resources" (at the right of the page), type in the document title and check the "plan member" box. Then click "Search."
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3. The employee then proceeds to the pharmacy to have the prescription filled.

By submitting a request for approval in paper form

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1. When the pharmacist enters the drug details into the computer system, they will receive a message to call Express Scripts Canada.
2. Express Scripts Canada will review the Prior Authorization request with the pharmacist and gather the necessary information.
3. If the pharmacist has all the required information and the request is approved, the drug will be dispensed. There may be a short delay, up to 60 minutes, while the approval is updated in the system.
4. If the pharmacist does not have all the necessary information or if the request is declined, the employee will have to return to the doctor. The pharmacist can provide the employee with a Prior Authorization request form for this return visit, or the employee can print it from www.empire.ca.

Q: The doctor charges a fee to complete the Prior Authorization Request Form. Will the drug plan reimburse this cost?

A: Not unless the plan includes a Health Care Spending Account or an Incidental Health Expense Benefit.

Q: Will the employer be informed which employees have been approved for a Prior Authorization drug, and the drug name?

A: No. All information provided to us is strictly confidential and is not shared with anyone other than the employee, unless they appoint a family member or doctor to receive relevant information.

Need help?

For assistance, please call our Customer Service Unit at 1 800 267-0215 or email us at group.csu@empire.ca.

The Empire Life Insurance Company (Empire Life) offers competitive individual and group life and health insurance, investment and retirement products to help you build wealth and protect your financial security.

Empire Life is among the top 10 life insurance companies in Canada¹ and is rated A (Excellent) by A.M. Best Company². Our vision is to be known for simplicity, being easy to do business with and having a personal touch.

¹ *The Globe and Mail Report on Business*, June 2014, based on revenue

² As at May 21, 2014

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