



National Employer Initiative on Specialty Drugs

Employer Focused, Employer Driven



Take Control and Take Action

Do you have a chronic health condition or know someone who does? Your answer is likely yes. Recent statistics show that chronic health conditions are the leading cause of death and disability in the U.S. today. Since a growing number of these conditions are rare and/or difficult to treat with standard therapies, doctors often turn to specialty drugs (also called biologic drugs).

If you or a member of your family is diagnosed with a complex chronic health condition, your first priority will be finding a way to get the best results from the prescribed treatment plan. This is no easy task. Managing a chronic condition, especially if treatment includes a specialty drug, can be overwhelming for both you and your family. Drug therapies can be difficult to follow and often come with side effects that make it hard to cope.

There are many ways you can take control and successfully manage complex conditions. Whether you are a patient or supporting someone who is, consider using these tips to get the best possible health outcomes and minimize stress.

Learn about the health condition and prescribed therapy. Don't be afraid to ask questions to ensure you get the answers you need. What are the expected long-term outcomes? How much will the treatment and drug cost? Are there other treatment options available? What side effects should be expected and which require additional or immediate medical attention? The more information you have, the more in control you will feel.

Know your benefits. It is important that you understand and use your medical and pharmacy benefits to get the most value from them. When you know your benefits, you are prepared to ask the right questions and get answers you understand. Use tools and resources provided by your insurance company, Pharmacy Benefits Manager (PBM) or employer. You can also use available call center representatives to get answers about your benefits before you seek care. Finding out after you have received a service that it will not be covered under your benefits can be both frustrating and costly.

Check that the drug prescribed by your doctor is covered by your medical or pharmacy benefit and find out if there are other requirements in place in order to receive the drug. For some specialty drugs, your doctor must communicate directly with your medical or pharmacy benefits plan administrator for coverage to be provided under your plan.

Understand your treatment plan. Ask your doctor or pharmacist for answers to your questions about your drug and treatment plan, like when to take the drug, how much to take, possible side effects to watch out for and report, and the consequences of not taking the drug as prescribed. Having answers to your questions gives you critical knowledge that puts you in control of your care and provides the best possible outcome for you.

Follow your doctor's advice. If you can't do this on your own, enlist a family member or friend to help you. It can be hard to stick with this type of drug therapy. There are often side effects, some drugs are hard to manage (e.g. self-injected) and many are expensive. But if you skip a dose or stop taking the drug altogether, your chances of successfully treating your condition are very low.

Tell your doctor about any side effects or other issues that interfere with your ability to follow your treatment plan.

Take advantage of the resources offered by your health team to help you maintain a good quality of life and get the best possible results from your treatment. Tap into support groups for assistance from others who are going through the same thing. If you are afraid or nervous about going to a support group, bring a family member or friend along to the first meeting.