

Navigating the World of Prescription Drugs



New Pharmacy Benefit Manager

- From 2014 through 2018 – Aetna
- Since January 1, 2019 - OptumRx

But co-insurance hasn't changed

2.1.2. Prescription Drug Schedule

Prescription Tier	Coinsurance	Minimum Covered Person Payment	Maximum Covered Person Payment
Retail 30 Day at Network Pharmacy			
Generic prescription drug	80%	\$10	\$50
Preferred brand-name prescription drug	75%	\$25	\$75
Non-preferred brand-name prescription drug	65%	\$80	\$150
Mail Order 31-90 Day at Network Pharmacy			
Prescription Tier		Copayment	
Generic prescription drug		\$20	
Preferred brand-name prescription drug		\$50	
Non-preferred brand-name prescription drug		\$100	
Out-of-Network Pharmacy			
Coinsurance for all prescription drugs		60%	
Out-of-Pocket Limit			
Annual individual out-of-pocket limit		\$1,000	
Annual family out-of-pocket limit		\$2,000	

What “Tier” is my prescription drug?

Review the drug formulary of your insurance plan. A drug formulary is a listing of specific prescription drugs in different categories that determines how much you will pay for the medication. Medications are usually grouped in tiers or categories of drugs. Take this list with you to each doctor’s appointment to help your doctor select an appropriate medication for your condition at the lowest cost for you.



Your 2019 Formulary

Effective January 1, 2019

Finding the FORMULARY

<http://doa.alaska.gov/drb/alaskacare/>

OptumRx®

AlaskaCare Employee Plan Formulary:

[AlaskaCare Employee Pharmacy Plan Formulary \[PDF\]](#)

[AlaskaCare Employee Pharmacy Quantity Limits \[PDF\]](#)

[AlaskaCare Employee Pharmacy Prior Authorization \[PDF\]](#)

Tier Information

Tier information

Using lower tier or preferred medications can help you pay your lowest out-of-pocket cost. Your plan may have multiple or no tiers. Please note: If you have a high deductible plan, the tier cost levels will apply once you hit your deductible.

Drug Tier	Includes	Helpful Tips
Tier 1	\$ Lower-cost generics and some brand-name	Use Tier 1 drugs for the lowest out-of-pocket costs.
Tier 2	\$\$ Mid-range cost preferred brand-name	Use Tier 2 drugs, instead of Tier 3, to help reduce your out-of-pocket costs.
Tier 3	\$\$\$ Highest-cost non-preferred	Many Tier 3 drugs have lower-cost options in Tier 1 or 2. Ask your doctor if they could work for you.

Drug list information

In this drug list, some medications are noted with letters next to them to help you see which ones may have coverage requirements or limits. Your benefit plan determines how these medications may be covered for you.

SP	Specialty Medication – Medication is designated as specialty.
3P	Tier 3 preferred

Drug Name

Drug Tier

Notes

Anesthetics

lidocaine external
ointment

1

lidocaine external patch 5
%

1

lidocaine-prilocaine
external cream

1

Example: Lidocaine 5% patch is a Tier 1 drug

Some drugs have quantity limits

AlaskaCare Employee Plan Formulary:

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Example:

Asthma/COPD (nebulized)	ACCUNEB (albuterol)	5 packages (125 vials or 375 mL)/30 days
	albuterol 2.5 mg/3 mL (0.083%)	180 vials (540 mL)/30 days
	albuterol 5 mg/mL (0.5%)	150 mL/30 days

This means Optum will only pay for a 30 day supply of up to 180 vials of albuterol

Some drugs require Prior Authorization

Because some medications are only approved or considered effective for certain conditions, OptumRx requires you to obtain pre-authorization before it will pay for them.

REQUESTING PRE-AUTHORIZATON: This is usually done by your provider.

GETTING A SHORT-TERM SUPPLY: If you must take a medication that requires prior authorization right away, there are two options that may work for you. First, ask your doctor if a sample is available. Or, check with your pharmacy to request a short-term supply of five days or less — keep in mind you will be responsible for the full cost at that time. If the prior authorization request is approved, then your pharmacist can fill the rest of your prescription.

NOTE: There is no list of medications that require prior authorization — only a list of medications that MAY require it. According to the formulary, you should contact OptumRx customer service to determine if your drug requires pre-authorization.

The ever-changing FORMULARY

The formulary can change....

Drugs may be added or removed from the **Formulary** by the **claims administrator** for certain reasons. A **prescription drug** may also be moved from one tier to another. Here are some reasons why:

- As **brand-name prescription drugs** lose their patents and generic versions become available, the **brand-name prescription drug** may be covered at a higher out-of-pocket cost while the **generic prescription drug** may be covered at a lower out-of-pocket cost.
- The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approves many new **prescription drugs** throughout the year.
- Drugs can be withdrawn from the market or may become available without a **prescription**.

The most up-to-date **formulary** information can be found at www.AlaskaCare.gov – so please visit it often.

Medical Exception

If you have a medical need for a Tier 3 (non-preferred brand-name) drug, your doctor can ask for a medical exception. If the exception is granted, the drug can be processed as a Tier 2 (preferred brand-name) drug for payment purposes. The exception is based on a determination that the higher tier drug is medically necessary in your situation.

Example: Synthroid, a commonly prescribed thyroid drug, is a Tier 3 drug. However, you may qualify for a “medical exception” to have it approved as a Tier 2 drug in order to lower your copayment. (You can further lower your copayment to \$50 for a 90-day supply by using the mail order program.)

Other ways to lower your co-payment

- **Purchase the drug directly from the manufacturer:** According to one of your colleagues, you can order a 90-day supply directly from Synthroid.com at a cost of \$75.
- **Look for manufacturer coupons.** Drug manufacturers of brand name medications may offer discount coupons on their websites for certain products. For example, we have been told by one of your colleagues that **Gilenya** offers a copayment assistance program which can cover the entire \$50 mail order copayment. To learn more, you should contact your drug manufacturer directly.
- **Check online for patient assistance programs.** Several programs are available to help people with low incomes afford prescription medicines. You may want to look at the following websites with information from each of these organizations: [Partnership for Prescription Assistance](#), [RxAssist](#), [NeedyMeds](#), and [goodrx.com](#). You may also want to look at the following website: <https://medicineassistancetool.org/My-Resources?sec=all-resources&cat=3>

More ways to lower your co-payment

- **Compare prices at several pharmacies.** Prices for prescription medicines may vary from pharmacy to pharmacy. You can call to check the price for your prescription or ask before you have it filled to find out the cost. **Case in point:** Consumer Reports recently found that a month's worth of generic Cymbalta in Raleigh, N.C., ranged from \$249 at a Walgreens to \$43 at Costco.
One note: If you have your prescriptions filled at different pharmacies, be sure to give your pharmacist a list of all of the medications that you are taking so that the pharmacist has a complete record to check for drug interactions or duplication.
- **Consider Not Using Insurance.** According to Consumer Reports, many chain and big-box pharmacies offer hundreds of generic drugs for just a few dollars for a one-month supply for "cash-paying" customers. To get the deals, ask the pharmacist whether you'll pay less by bypassing your insurance. And then compare prices at several pharmacies.
- **Check out store prescription drug plans.** Many chain drug stores, pharmacies at grocery stores, and big box discount stores offer savings on a select number of prescription medications through drug-savings programs that you can join for free or at a small cost. One of your colleagues reports she paid a \$36 fee to join the Kroger Pharmacy Savings Club (for use at Fred Meyers pharmacies) and saved over over \$140.00 on her medications . Following is a link to the savings club: <https://slickdeals.net/f/11968563-kroger-pharmacy-savings-club-36-single-72-family-membership>

Last but not least....

Tell Your Doctor You're Concerned About Costs

According to a Consumer Reports article, only 6 percent of people discuss the cost of a new medication during a doctor's visit.

- So speak up when your prescription is being written. This gives you the opportunity to let your doctor know that, in addition to safety and effectiveness, costs matter to you.
- Bring the formulary with you to your appointment.
- If your doctor is prescribing a Tier 2 or 3 drug, ask whether a less expensive Tier 1 generic drug would be as effective. You can also ask about a cheaper "therapeutic substitution" which is a different drug that might work just as well.

Please share what you learn

The world of prescription drugs is difficult to navigate. As you work your way through it, please pass on any tips that you learn so we can share them with your colleagues.

When in doubt.....

Email us at:

HealthcareAdvocates@akcourts.us