

BC PharmaCare Drug Information

The drug below is being considered for possible coverage under the B.C. PharmaCare program. PharmaCare is a government-funded drug plan that helps British Columbians with the cost of eligible prescription drugs and specific medical supplies. For more information on PharmaCare, visit [Ministry of Health - PharmaCare](#).

PharmaCare reviews each drug for treating a specific illness or medical condition (known as an “indication”). If a decision is made to cover the drug, it will be only for that illness or condition.

In some cases, PharmaCare may cover a drug only for people who have the illness or condition and have not responded to other drugs used to treat that illness or condition.

For more information on PharmaCare’s drug coverage review process, see the last page of this information sheet.

Information about the drug	
Generic name (scientific name)	rituximab
Brand name	Rituxan®
Manufacturer	Hoffmann-La Roche Ltd.
Indication	Multiple Sclerosis (MS)
Has the drug been reviewed by the Common Drug Review (CDR)?	No. Rituximab has not been reviewed by the CDR for the treatment of MS.
Public input start date	Wednesday October 11, 2017
Public input closing date	Wednesday November 8, 2017 AT MIDNIGHT
How is the drug taken?	Rituximab is administered by intravenous infusion (a slow injection into a vein over time).
How often is the drug is taken?	Rituximab may be administered every 6 months for the treatment of MS; however, other dosages have been reported.

Information about the drug	
General drug and/or drug study information	<p>Rituximab belongs to a class of medications known as monoclonal antibodies. The drug is an antibody that targets the CD-20 B-cell lymphocyte and helps to deplete the cell.</p> <p>Rituximab is not indicated for the treatment of MS; however, it may be used off-label for this indication. There are some studies which looked at the use of rituximab for the treatment of MS.</p> <p>Studies looked at the following to determine if rituximab is safe and effective for the treatment of Multiple Sclerosis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of contrast-enhancing lesions • Number of relapses • Bad reactions • Serious bad reactions • Patients leaving the trial due to bad reactions • Bad reactions of special interest (infections)
Other considerations	None

Note:

The Common Drug Review (CDR) is a national organization that reviews drugs on behalf of Canadian public sector plans when manufacturers want to have the jurisdictions provide coverage for the drugs. For detailed information on B.C. PharmaCare's drug review process, including the role of the CDR in that process, see [The Drug Review Process in B.C. - Overview](#).

Cost of the drug under review compared to other drugs used to treat the same indication			
generic name (Brand Name) of Drug Comparator	PharmaCare Status (if and how the drug is already covered)	Usual Dose	Annual Cost of Therapy
rituximab (Rituxan®)	<p>Non-Benefit for MS</p> <p>Limited Coverage for other indications</p>	Initial dose by intravenous infusion, followed by an intravenous infusion every 6 months	<p>Year 1: \$4,882 to \$14,646</p> <p>Subsequent years: \$4,882 to \$9,764</p>
Interferons			
Interferon beta-1a (Avonex®)	Limited Coverage	One intramuscular injection once per week	\$23,376
Interferon beta-1a (Rebif®)	Limited Coverage	One subcutaneous injection 3 times weekly	\$22,113 to \$26,731
Interferon beta-1b (Betaseron®)	Limited Coverage	One subcutaneous injection every other day	\$19,040
interferon beta-1b (Extavia®)	Limited Coverage	One subcutaneous injection every other day	\$19,611

Cost of the drug under review compared to other drugs used to treat the same indication			
generic name (Brand Name) of Drug Comparator	PharmaCare Status (if and how the drug is already covered)	Usual Dose	Annual Cost of Therapy
peginterferon beta-1a (Plegridy™)	Non-Benefit	One subcutaneous injection every two weeks	\$24,044
Biologics			
alemtuzumab (Lemtrada®)	Under Review	One intravenous infusion per day for five days followed by one intravenous infusion per day for 3 days after 12 months	Year 1: \$62,811 Year 2: \$37,687
daclizumab beta (Zinbryta™)	Under Review	One subcutaneous injection monthly	\$29,085
natalizumab (Tysabri®)	Limited Coverage	One intravenous infusion every 4 weeks	\$44,988
Other injectable immunomodulatory			
glatiramer (Copaxone®)	Limited Coverage	One subcutaneous injection daily	\$17,620
Oral medications			
dimethyl fumarate (Tecfidera®)	Limited Coverage	One capsule twice daily	Year 1: \$25,580 Subsequent Years: \$25,827
fingolimod (Gilenya®)	Limited Coverage	One capsule daily	\$32,638
teriflunomide (Aubagio®)	Limited Coverage	One tablet daily	\$21,283

The Drug Review Process in B.C.

A manufacturer submits a request to the Ministry of Health (Ministry).

An independent group called the [Drug Benefit Council \(DBC\)](#) gives advice to the Ministry. The DBC looks at:

- whether the drug is safe and effective
- advice from a national group called the [Common Drug Review \(CDR\)](#)
- what the drug costs and whether it is a good value for the people of B.C.
- ethical considerations involved with covering or not covering the drug
- input from physicians, patients, caregivers, patient groups and drug submission sponsors

The Ministry makes PharmaCare coverage decisions by taking into account:

- the existing PharmaCare policies, programs and resources
- the evidence-informed advice of the DBC
- the drugs already covered by PharmaCare that are used to treat similar medical conditions
- the overall cost of covering the drug

For more information about the B.C. Drug Review Process, visit: [The Drug Review Process in B.C. - Overview](#).

This document is intended for information only.

It does not take the place of advice from a physician or other qualified health care provider.