

BC PharmaCare Drug Information

The drug below is being considered for coverage under the BC PharmaCare program. PharmaCare is a government-funded drug plan that helps B.C. residents with the cost of eligible prescription drugs and medical supplies. For more information about PharmaCare, visit the [PharmaCare website](#).

PharmaCare reviews each drug for treating a specific illness or medical condition (also called an “indication”). If PharmaCare decides to cover a drug, that coverage applies only to the indication(s) specified. In some cases, PharmaCare covers a drug only for people who have not responded to other drugs that treat the same indication.

More information about the PharmaCare drug review process is provided on the last page of this document.

Drug information	
Generic name (scientific name)	anifrolumab
Brand name	Saphnelo® SC
Manufacturer	AstraZeneca Canada Inc.
Indication	For the treatment of adult patients with active, autoantibody positive, systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE), in addition to standard therapy
Has the drug been reviewed by CDA-AMC, or will CDA-AMC be reviewing it? (See note below.)	Yes For more information about the CDA-AMC Reimbursement Review (CRR) of anifrolumab (Saphnelo SC) Search the CDA-AMC Reports .
Public input start date	Wednesday, April 29, 2026
Public input closing date	Tuesday, May 26, 2026, at 11:59 pm
How is the drug taken?	Anifrolumab is given by subcutaneous injection. A subcutaneous injection is an injection given under the skin, into the layer of tissue between the skin and the muscle.
How often is the drug taken?	Anifrolumab is injected once weekly, preferably on the same day each week. Rotation of injection sites is recommended with each dose.

General drug and/or drug study information

The Ministry of Health is reviewing anifrolumab for the treatment of adult patients with active, autoantibody positive, systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE), in addition to standard therapy. SLE is a long-term autoimmune disease in which the body's immune system mistakenly attacks its own healthy tissues. This can cause inflammation and damage in different parts of the body, such as the joints, skin, kidneys, heart, lungs, blood, and brain.

Common symptoms of SLE can include joint pain or swelling, fatigue, skin rashes, sensitivity to sunlight, fever, and swelling in areas such as the legs or around the eyes. Symptoms can vary from person to person and may come and go over time.

Anifrolumab is a type of specialized protein that blocks the action of a group of proteins called Type I Interferons. Type I Interferons are found at high levels in people with lupus and blocking them may reduce the immune system overactivity and inflammation that causes the signs and symptoms of lupus.

Studies looked at the following:

- Percentage of patients achieving a British Isles Lupus Assessment Group-based Composite Lupus Assessment (BICLA)^a response at week 52
- Percentage of patients achieving a BICLA response at week 52 with maintained low (or reduced) oral corticosteroid (OCS) use
- Time to first BICLA response sustained through week 52
- Time to first flare through week 52
- Percentage of patients achieving an OCS dose of less than or equal to 7.5 mg/day at week 40, sustained through week 52
- Annualized flare rate^b
- Percentage of patients achieving a Systemic Lupus Erythematosus Responder Index score of 4 or more (SRI-4)^c at week 52
- Bad reactions
- Serious bad reactions
- Patients leaving the trial due to bad reactions
- Bad reactions of special interest: Herpes Zoster (shingles)

Drug information	
Other considerations	None

Note:

CDA-AMC ([Canada's Drug Agency-L'Agence des Médicaments du Canada](#)) is a national organization that reviews drugs on behalf of Canadian public sector plans when drug manufacturers want those plans to provide coverage for the drug. For detailed information about the PharmaCare drug review process, including the role of the CDA-AMC Reimbursement Review (CRR) in that process, visit [How PharmaCare Decides Which Drugs to Cover](#).

Table of Comparators Used to Treat the Same Indication

Generic Name (Brand Name) of Drug Comparator	Dosage Form	PharmaCare Status (if and how the drug is already covered)
anifrolumab (Saphnelo SC)	Single-use autoinjector	Under Review
Biologics		
anifrolumab (Saphnelo)	Vial for intravenous infusion	Limited Coverage
belimumab (Benlysta)	Subcutaneous injection Vial for intravenous infusion	Non-Benefit
Biologics - Off-Label Use		
rituximab (biosimilars)	Vial for IV infusion	Limited Coverage ^d Non-Benefit for SLE
Antimalarial Drugs - Off-label Use		
hydroxychloroquine (generics)	Tablet	Regular Benefit, Subject to LCA

^a The British Isles Lupus Assessment Group–based Composite Lupus Assessment (BICLA) is a tool used in clinical trials to determine if a new medicine is effectively treating SLE, the most common form of lupus. BICLA measures overall improvement in lupus activity across the body, requiring improvement in all affected organs with no new or worsening disease.

^b The annualised flare rate reflects how often lupus flares occurred over the study period, taking into account both the number of flares and the length of time patients were followed. It is calculated by dividing the total number of flares by the total follow-up time across all patients and is expressed as flares per patient-year.

^c SRI-4 measures overall improvement in lupus activity and requires a minimum four-point improvement in disease activity, with no new major symptoms and no overall worsening of the disease.

^d Limited coverage for the treatment of rheumatoid arthritis (RA), Granulomatosis with polyangiitis (GPA) or microscopic polyangiitis (MPA), relapsing-remitting multiple sclerosis (RRMS), neuromyelitis optica spectrum disorder (NMOSD), and generalized myasthenia gravis (gMG).

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Corticosteroids		
prednisone (generics)	Tablet	Regular Benefit, Subject to LCA
prednisolone (generics)	Oral solution	Regular Benefit, Subject to LCA
methylprednisolone (Solu-Medrol, Depo-Medrol, generic)	Intramuscular injection or intravenous infusion	Regular Benefit, Subject to LCA
Immunosuppressants - Off Label Use		
azathioprine (generic)	Tablet	Regular Benefit, Subject to LCA
cyclosporine (generic)	Capsule	Limited Coverage ^e Subject to LCA
methotrexate (generic)	Tablet Vial	Regular Benefit, Subject to LCA
mycophenolate mofetil (Cellcept, generic)	Tablet Capsule	Limited Coverage ^f Subject to LCA
cyclophosphamide (Procytox)	Tablet	Regular Benefit
	Vial for injection	Non-Benefit
leflunomide (Arava, generic)	Tablet	Regular Benefit, Subject to LCA

^e Special Authority requests for the treatment of patients 18 years of age and older with active, antibody positive moderate to severe systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE) will be considered on a case-by-case basis when coverage is requested by a rheumatologist or dermatologist

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<p>The Drug Review Process in B.C.</p> <p>A manufacturer submits a request to the Ministry of Health (Ministry).</p> <p>An independent national organization called Canada's Drug Agency (CDA-AMC) provides evidence-based recommendations to public drug plans across Canada through its reimbursement review process.</p> <p>As part of the CDA-AMC's Clinical Reimbursement Review process, the Canadian Drug Expert Committee (CDEC) makes reimbursement recommendations for non-oncology pharmaceuticals to the participating federal, provincial, and territorial publicly funded drug plans. In developing its recommendations, the CDEC considers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • whether the drug is safe and effective • what the drug costs and whether it is a good value to the citizens of B.C. • ethical considerations related to covering or not covering the drug • input from physicians, patients, caregivers, patient groups and drug submission sponsors <p>The Ministry makes a BC PharmaCare coverage decision by considering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • existing BC PharmaCare policies, programs and resources • the evidence-informed advice of the CDA-AMC • the recommendations and reimbursement conditions of the CDEC • if a Ministry Initiated review, the advice of an independent expert group called the Drug Benefit Council (DBC) • BC-specific patient input collected through the Your Voice website • drugs already covered by BC PharmaCare that treat similar medical conditions • the overall cost of covering the drug <p>Visit BC PharmaCare and Drug reviews for more information.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">This document provides information only.</p> <p>It does not take the place of advice from a physician or other qualified health care provider.</p>		