



BC PharmaCare

YourVoice Drug Information

The drug below is being considered for 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.

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 indication.

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 for that indication.

Information about the drug	
Generic name (scientific name)	OnabotulinumtoxinA
Brand name	Botox®
Manufacturer	Allergan Inc.
Indication	Prevention of headaches in adults with chronic migraines
Has the drug been reviewed by the Common Drug Review (CDR)? The CDR is a national organization that reviews drugs on behalf of Canadian public sector plans when manufacturers want the jurisdictions to provide coverage for the drugs.	This drug is currently under review ; a final recommendation is expected after April 25, 2019.
Public input start date	April 3, 2019
Public input closing date	May 1, 2019 at midnight
How is the drug taken?	OnabotulinumtoxinA is available as a powder that a doctor mixes into a solution and injects into 31 sites in the muscles of the head and neck.
How often is the drug taken?	OnabotulinumtoxinA is administered every 12 weeks.

Information about the drug	
General drug and/or drug study information	<p>OnabotulinumtoxinA is a muscle relaxant that partially blocks nerve impulses to muscles where it has been injected. This prevents some contraction of the muscle for a period of time. In the case of migraines, it is suspected that onabotulinumtoxinA blocks certain pain signals, preventing migraines from developing. It is produced by specific strains of <i>Clostridium botulinum</i> bacteria, and then carefully purified for human use.</p> <p>Studies of onabotulinumtoxinA looked at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Headache frequency (whether the patient had fewer headaches than they did without the drug) • Headache severity (changes in how much patients reported their headaches impacted them, using tools like the HIT-6 Headache Impact questionnaire) • Whether there was a change in how often a patient sought other medical help for their headaches (for example, going to the ER) or how often they used pain medication to treat a headache • Bad reactions (such as neck pain, muscle weakness, droopy eyelids) • Serious bad reactions (such as suicidal ideation) • Patients leaving the trial
Other considerations	OnabotulinumtoxinA is the only drug in Canada approved specifically for the prevention of <i>chronic</i> migraines (when a person experiences more than 15 migraines per month, for at least 3 months in a row).

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 (\$)
OnabotulinumtoxinA (BOTOX®)	Under Review (Available as a Limited Coverage Drug for other indications)	155–195 units every 12 weeks	2,856–3,570
Pizotyline/Pizotifen (SANDOMIGRAN)	Regular Benefit (available to anyone)	1.5–6 mg/day	424–1,695
Topiramate (generics)	Regular Benefit (available to anyone)	50–200 mg/day	177–355
Flunarizine (generics)	Regular Benefit (available to anyone)	10 mg/day	537
Erenumab (AIMOVIG™)	Pending Review	70–140 mg/month	6,384–12,768

The Drug Review Process in British Columbia

A manufacturer submits a request to the Ministry of Health (the Ministry) to have their drug covered by PharmaCare.

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:

- 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.