

Opioid agonist therapy Gap Coverage Program

Information for health care providers

Treatment for opioid use

Opioid agonist therapy (OAT), which entails the provision of medications like buprenorphine/naloxone or methadone, is an evidence-based treatment for opioid use disorder.

Program information

If a patient does not have supplementary health benefits coverage, the cost of OAT should not prevent them from accessing treatment.

The OAT Gap Coverage Program is designed to provide immediate, no-cost access to OAT drugs for patients who **do not** have supplementary health benefit coverage.

The program offers 120 days of coverage for OAT medications, during which the patient is expected to enrol in a supplementary health benefits plan to ensure continued coverage.

Most government-sponsored health benefit plans, such as plans for low-income Albertans, do not have premiums. For Albertans who are not eligible for a low-income health benefit plan, there are other government-sponsored health benefit plans, such as the Non-Group coverage plan. They may be required to pay a premium or co-payments under some plans. Subsidized premiums are available for eligible Albertans.

Helping patients find a benefit plan

For information or to enrol in a government-sponsored benefit plan, visit alberta.ca and search “health benefits” or call the Alberta Supports Contact Centre at 1-877-644-9992.

Eligibility and enrolment

Anyone who has an Alberta Personal Health Number (i.e. Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan), but does not have supplementary health benefits coverage and is prescribed buprenorphine/naloxone or methadone is eligible for gap coverage for 120 days, while they enrol in a supplementary health benefits plan.

If someone does not have a Personal Health Number, they can obtain one by following the process outlined at www.alberta.ca/ahcip.aspx or by calling 1-800-232-7215.

Enrolment in the OAT Gap Coverage Program is immediate. You do not need to sign up or enrol your patient(s). When a patient presents their prescription for buprenorphine/naloxone or methadone at a pharmacy, the pharmacist can confirm whether they are eligible and enrol them.

Visit alberta.ca/opioid for more information

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Classification: Public



Talking about opioid use with patients

If you are looking for resources and support regarding opioid agonist therapy and how to talk to patients about opioid use, visit:

- <http://www.cpsa.ca/physician-prescribing-practices/methadone-program/>
- <https://acfp.ca/phc-ori-2019-updates/>

Eligible medications

This program provides coverage for buprenorphine/naloxone and methadone only.

Information for pharmacists

An Alberta Blue Cross Benefact contains information on the program, including program codes. You can contact [Alberta Blue Cross](#) directly if you have questions.

Calculating the coverage period

The 120-day duration is calculated based on the amount of OAT medication dispensed. This will not necessarily be a continuous period of time. This allows for a patient to start therapy several times within a 12 month period and still receive gap coverage if necessary.

Extending gap coverage

If a patient has enrolled for benefits under a government-sponsored, employer or individual plan, they may be eligible to continue to receive OAT gap coverage beyond 120 days until their benefits come into effect.

To be considered for an extension, a patient, or someone on their behalf, must complete the extension request form and submit it to Alberta Blue Cross.

Find the extension request form at alberta.ca/opioid-agonist-therapy-gap-coverage-program.aspx.

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