



**March 30, 2020**

## Helping to protect supply, member access to medicine during COVID-19 pandemic

Given the quickly evolving national health emergency, we're taking action to help your plan members have timely, safe access to medicine. Actions include:

- Extending some prior authorizations
- Applying a quantity limit bundle to prevent unnecessary stockpiling due to COVID-19

Your plan is automatically opted-in to the prior authorization extensions and quantity limit bundling.

### **Extending prior authorizations to maintain member access**

During this unprecedented time, it may be more challenging for members to see their prescribers. To prevent gaps in therapy, we are extending many clinical prior authorizations for 90 days. This applies to authorizations set to expire between March 23 and June 30. For instance, if a prior authorization is set to expire on May 15, the new date will be August 15.

Authorizations for certain medicines will not be extended based on clinical and safety guidelines. A list of those medicines will be available.

## **Preventing potential shortages of key drugs**

While at this time there is no evidence of widespread drug shortages, we must balance supply and demand to support both members with ongoing needs and patients requiring treatment for COVID-19. Some of the medicines being identified as possible treatments for COVID-19 are also used to treat conditions like malaria, HIV, rheumatoid arthritis and lupus.

Effective immediately, we have a new utilization management (UM) product bundle. This will include quantity limits on medications that potentially treat COVID-19 and are used by members for other conditions. Limits will apply to claims from all pharmacies.

### **Albuterol meter dose inhalers**

A quantity limit will be added to albuterol inhalers. The new limit is 2 per 30 days (200 inhalations per device) at a retail store, or 6 per 90 days with mail order.

- These changes apply only to inhalers, not to nebulizer solutions or oral tablets.
- These limits are already commonly used by many of our clients and included in some of our formulary designs.

### ***Chloroquine, hydroxychloroquine, KALETRA® and Azithromycin***

A quantity limit will be added in order to limit the amount of these drugs dispensed.

- *Chloroquine, hydroxychloroquine*: 10-day supply, limit of one fill per 60 days
- KALETRA: 14-day supply, limit of one fill per 60 days
- *Azithromycin* 250 mg tablets: limit of 6 tablets or one blister pack of 6 tablets per five days; limit of one fill per 60 days

These medicines may help reduce the duration of COVID-19, so we will work to provide appropriate member access for that purpose. It is also important that members have access to these medicines to treat chronic conditions.

The situation is evolving rapidly as results from clinical trials and case studies are made available. We will continue to evaluate the information and update the requirements as needed. **Quantity limits and included medications will be automatically updated to stay in line with current clinical guidelines and market conditions.**

## **Minimizing disruption for members currently taking these medications**

To minimize disruption for members currently taking these medicines, we are implementing new claim logic to identify diagnosis and previous utilization to bypass this limit as follows:

1. Has the member filled a 30-day supply within the previous 180 days? If so, the claim will bypass the quantity limit.
2. Does the claim have an appropriate non-COVID-19 diagnosis code such as malaria, HIV, rheumatoid arthritis or lupus? If so, the claim will bypass the quantity limit.

If a member does not have a claim history for these drugs OR a diagnosis code for malaria, lupus, RA or HIV, the quantity limit will apply. Prescriptions exceeding the quantity limits or those with no diagnosis code will require prior authorization.

This is an uncertain time. We understand you and your members are concerned about being able to obtain needed medications. We remain focused on ensuring plan members have timely, safe and appropriate access to their medicines.

Contact your Aetna representative with any questions you may have.

### **Resources**

- **Stay up-to-date with the latest [press releases](#)**
- **Access [Aetna COVID-19 FAQs](#)**

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