



Rx Focus

Seasonal Allergies

As the winter comes to a close, we are at the start of Hay Fever season. Also known as seasonal allergic rhinitis, Hay Fever is one of the most common chronic diseases in the U.S affecting as much as 20% of the population, according to the American Academy of Allergies, Asthma, and Immunology. Symptoms usually begin when children are about 10 years old, and include sneezing, congestion, runny nose and postnasal drip, itchy throat, eyes and ears. Those affected with allergies may only experience symptoms for a few weeks of the year while others experience symptoms daily. Typical springtime allergens include tree pollen. In the summer grass and weed pollens are the primary cause while ragweed is normally the cause in the fall. Most affected individuals with multiple outdoor allergies will experience relief during the winter with the arrival of cold weather. The winter may not help those that experience symptoms of allergies due to dust, animal dander, or indoor molds when more time indoors is required.

Help is on the way, Generic Flonase® Nasal Spray is now Available

Par Pharmaceuticals and GlaxoSmithKline have entered into an agreement that allows Par to sell a generic version of Flonase® Nasal Spray. Fluticasone propionate aqueous nasal spray is available as a bioequivalent fully substitutable for Flonase®. The generic is indicated for the same uses as Flonase®; management of the nasal symptoms of seasonal and perennial allergic and non-allergic rhinitis. Both Flonase® and fluticasone propionate aqueous nasal spray can be used in adults and in children greater than four years of age.

The addition of the generic Flonase® provides a unique situation in the Nasal Steroid therapeutic class. Generic Flonase® is the first and only available bioequivalent fully substitutable product available. There are several other brand nasal steroid preparations currently on the market. Included with Flonase on the CBCA Rx Preferred Drug List is Nasonex. Non-Preferred products include. Beconase AQ, Nasacort AQ, Nasarel, and Rhinocort Aqua.

Patients are urged to speak with their physician concerning the possibility of using the generic Flonase® instead of a medication that is currently only available as a brand-name product. Patients will experience lower copayments by using the generic Flonase® for relief of their seasonal allergies.

Other Options: CBCA Rx has an Additional Program Available, OTC Assist™

Members that use their nasal steroids in conjunction with a Non-Sedating Antihistamine such as Zyrtec/D, Allegra/D, or Clarinex/D may be able to save additionally on copayments by using the over-the-counter (OTC) antihistamine Claritin known generically as Loratidine or the generic for Allegra, fexofenadine. The CBCA Rx Assist OTC Program used by several clients to reduce both costs to the client and to the members for medications in the Non-Sedating Antihistamine therapeutic class. If your company is interested in this program please feel free to contact your CBCA Rx Account Manager.



Industry Focus

Higher Risk of Blood Clot Development in Ortho Evra Birth Control Patch Users than those using Oral Birth Control Pills

Ortho Evra, manufactured by Ortho-McNeil, was the first skin patch approved by the FDA for birth control. The popular "once-a-week" birth control has been linked to some serious side effects including blood clots, heart attack, stroke, coma, and even death. This is due to its high level of estrogen, 60% higher than the typical birth control pill. The risk is even greater in women who smoke.

Since the Ortho Evra Patch is effective for one week, it is considered a much more convenient method of birth control than the typical once daily oral birth control pill.

The FDA is continuing to monitor safety reports, while Ortho-McNeil is conducting additional studies. It should be noted that these adverse effects are relatively rare event, but has been reported as a potential risk of all hormonal contraceptive therapy. Women who use the patch are strongly advised not to smoke. Some women should not use the patch: women who have a history of blood clots, certain cancers, heart attack or stroke, as well as those who are or may be pregnant. The FDA advises women to talk to their doctor or healthcare provider about whether or not the Ortho Evra patch is the right method of birth control for them.

New Restriction Plan for Acne Drug

The FDA recently announced the start of an updated mandatory safety program for the acne drug, Accutane, and its generics.

The program named iPLEDGE program is an improved version of the previous S.M.A.R.T. program will be effective March 1, 2006.

Accutane (isotretinoin) is prescribed to treat severe acne. Although Roche is the manufacturer of brand name Accutane, there are several generic manufacturers of the isotretinoin. Approximately 200,000 people use this drug annually in the United States.

Isotretinoin use during pregnancy has a long documented history of causing birth defects. Birth defects following isotretinoin exposure include abnormalities of the face, eyes, ears, skull, central nervous system, cardiovascular system, and thymus and parathyroid glands. Cases of IQ scores less than 85, with or without other abnormalities, have been reported as well. Additionally, there is an increased risk of spontaneous abortion and premature births.

Although there is a black box warning on the label of this drug, and a restricted-access program in place since 2002, about 200 women became pregnant annually while on isotretinoin. This has led the FDA to implement tougher guidelines.

Under the new rules, all patients who use isotretinoin (brand or generic) will need to register into the new system. Women of childbearing age will be required to take monthly pregnancy tests and show they are not pregnant before a new prescription for Accutane can be written and filled. Prescribers and patients who have questions about the iPLEDGE program should contact the iPLEDGE call center at 1-866-495-0654 or on line at <https://www.ipledgeprogram.com>.



New Drug Approvals

Amitiza™

Approved: 1/31/2006

Chemical Name: lubiprostone

Manufacturer: Sucampo Pharmaceuticals / Takeda Pharmaceuticals America.

Therapeutic Class: Chloride channel activators

Approved Indication: treatment of chronic idiopathic adult constipation not caused by other diseases or by the use of medications.

Average Wholesale Price: unavailable at this time

Notes: This medication will be covered for members of all CBCA Rx plans, but will be subject to MedManage Rx Quantity Limits.

Vivaglobin™

Approved: 1/31/2006

Chemical Name: immune globulin

Therapeutic Class: Chloride channel activators

Approved Indication: prevention of serious infections in patients with Primary Immune Deficiency Diseases (PIDD).

Average Wholesale Price: unavailable at this time

Notes: Vivaglobin is administered subcutaneously weekly using an infusion pump. This makes home self-administration possible. CBCA Rx will cover this product only with Medical Necessity information provided by the treating physician.



Recipe X-Change

Chicken with a Lemon Herb Sauce

Difficulty: Easy

Prep Time: 10 minutes

Cook Time: 15 minutes

Yield: 4 servings

Ingredients:

4 boneless skinless chicken breast halves
2 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper to flavor

Lemon Herb Sauce:

1 clove garlic, peeled
1/4 tsp. salt
1 lemon, zested and juiced
1/3 cup extra-virgin olive oil
1/2 cup chopped fresh parsley leaves
1/3 cup chopped fresh mint leaves
1 1/2 tsp. freshly ground black pepper

For the Chicken: Preheat an oven to 450 degrees Fahrenheit.

Heat a large ovenproof skillet over medium-high heat. Add the olive oil and swirl to coat the skillet. Season the chicken breast with salt and pepper on the smooth side of each breast. Place in the skillet seasoned side down and cook without disturbing until brown and crisp, about 3 to 4 minutes. Season the top side of the chicken and flip. Cook 1 minute over the burner; then transfer the skillet to the oven until chicken registers 165 degrees Fahrenheit on an instant-read thermometer, about 6 to 8 minutes more. Place on a cutting board and let rest for 5 minutes before slicing.

For the sauce: smash the garlic clove, sprinkle with the salt, and with the side of a large knife, mash and smear the mixture to a coarse paste. Transfer to a blender with the parsley, mint, pepper, lemon zest, and juice. Pulse until coarsely chopped and then slowly drizzle in the olive oil. Pour into a small bowl and adjust seasoning. Deglaze pan with the sauce, if desired, and serve with the chicken.

Note: This sauce is also great with steaks and pork chops.



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