

Step Therapy: *(also: fail-first therapy)*

Refers to a situation when the physician prescribes one drug, and the health plan requires the patient to try a less expensive drug first – in effect overruling the treating physician.

Only after the drug fails to help the patient will the plan cover the drug that was initially prescribed. Patients can be required to try multiple cheaper drugs in a process that takes weeks, months, or even longer. That's why this policy is also sometimes called "fail-first" therapy.

FOR CANCER PATIENTS, STEP THERAPY CAN CAUSE:



REDUCTION

in effectiveness of a prescribed treatment plan



HARMFUL DELAYS

in receiving effective care

ALTHOUGH INSURERS USE STEP THERAPY AS A COST-SAVING TOOL, IT CAN:



INCREASE

out-of-pocket expenses for patients



PROLONG

treatment & lead to worse outcomes

“ Step therapy, while there may be a time and place for it, really isn't beneficial to those of us who are hurting and need specific medications to live daily life. Doctors, administrators and pharmacists who have no experience treating specific diseases are calling the shots and determining the pre-authorizations required for certain medications. We need specialized experts determining what medications are best for treating our individual cases.”



Heidi Barrett, Psoriatic Arthritis

EMPLOYERS SHOULD NOT allow step therapy to be included in prescription coverage plans.

If that's not possible, they should adopt limits such as those in the "Safe Step Act." They will protect patients who are most likely to suffer significant harm from taking medications other than what their doctor has prescribed.

Scan the QR code

to view a short video about step therapy.



Also available at [BetterRxBenefits.org](https://www.BetterRxBenefits.org)