

Medications for Alzheimer's Disease

Information about Pharmacare coverage by Manitoba Health

There is currently no cure for Alzheimer's disease and no treatment that will stop its progression. However, several medications are available that can help with some symptoms such as decline in memory, language, thinking abilities and motor skills.

Aricept™ (Donepezil), Exelon™ (Rivastigmine) and Reminyl™ ER (Galantamine Hydrobromide) are approved in Canada to treat some of the symptoms of Alzheimer's disease. These medications are part of a group of medications known as *cholinesterase inhibitors*. All oral formulations are covered under the Manitoba Drug Benefits and Interchangeability Formulary. Exelon also comes in a patch but this formulation is not covered at present. They are not cures for the disease, as they do not affect the underlying degenerative cause of the disease. The medications reduce the breakdown of acetylcholine in the brain. The resulting increased level of acetylcholine can enhance the person's ability to think, remember, use language, and carry out activities of daily living.

Ebixa® (Memantine Hydrochloride) is conditionally approved for use by Health Canada to relieve the symptoms of people with moderate to severe Alzheimer's disease, but it is not covered under the Manitoba Drug Benefits and Interchangeability Formulary. Ebixa is a *NMDA (N-methyl-D-aspartate) receptor antagonist* that may help to normalize the transmission of nerve signals and possibly slows the decline in some symptoms of Alzheimer's disease. In controlled trials, Ebixa has been used in combination with Aricept.

How is benefit coverage for cholinesterase inhibitors obtained?

To meet requirements for coverage of these medications, you must:

- File a Pharmacare Application and Consent Authorization Form
- Be eligible for benefits under the Manitoba Health Pharmacare Drug Program
- Have reached your designated deductible
- Have a confirmed diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease.

After a diagnosis of mild to moderate Alzheimer's disease and meeting Pharmacare criteria for coverage of this group of medications, the prescribing physician will contact Manitoba Health to apply for coverage for the person.

It is important to note that for cholinesterase inhibitor benefit coverage, an Exceptional Drug Status (Part 3) form must be filed by the physician. The income-based Pharmacare deductible criteria apply to Aricept™, Exelon™ and Reminyl™ ER benefit coverage.

Factsheets about Aricept™, Exelon™, Reminyl™ ER and Ebixa® are available through the Alzheimer Society of Manitoba's Provincial Office or the Regional Office nearest you.

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The Alzheimer Society of Manitoba's mission is to alleviate the individual, family and social consequences of Alzheimer's disease and related disorders while supporting the search for a cure.

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