

# Blue Cross benefit changes

## Access expands for key first-line osteoporosis medications

On May 1, 2018, Alberta Health updated the Blue Cross drug benefit criteria for zoledronic acid, making it easier for care providers across Alberta to provide the most appropriate treatment for osteoporosis.

The new benefit criteria remove restrictions related to gender and age, drop the requirement for women to have a bone mineral density test, and ease some of the restrictions for people with gastrointestinal issues.

The high out-of-pocket expense of zoledronic acid has been a barrier to many hip fracture patients and many claims were denied due to the strict criteria for coverage. The cost of infusion is now also covered within the medication coverage supplied by Blue Cross

On June 1, 2018, changes to the criteria for denosumab were also applied to align with the criteria established for zoledronic acid. These changes will allow Alberta Health Services' Fracture Liaison Services (FLS) greater clinical selection for the treatment of hip fracture patients.

"This is excellent news," says Dr. Michael Mulholland, co-lead for the FLS Working Group with Shannon Falsetti. "It speaks to the patient advocacy work done by the FLS and the Bone and Joint Health Strategic Clinical Network, on behalf of all Albertans, allowing fair access to medications which will reduce the significant comorbidity associated with osteoporosis."

"We would also like to acknowledge the help from our partners at the Dr. David Hanley Osteoporosis Centre, Alberta Health Services Drug Utilization and Alberta Health for working with us to improve access to appropriate therapy post hip fracture," says Falsetti.

"It is through the Bone and Joint Health SCN's continued impassioned, collaborative discussions that this gap was highlighted and the change has been championed," Falsetti says. "In this case, persistence has shown, and will continue to show, value for all across the spectrum of care."

Information on the criteria can be found on the Alberta Blue Cross website:

[Zoledronic Acid - Alberta Blue Cross - May 1 2018](#)

[Denosumab - Alberta Blue Cross - June 1 2018](#)

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