GLP-1 Drugs – Medi-Cal Rx Members' Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

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DHCS
CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH CARE SERVICES

Per the enacted 2025-26 State Budget, the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) is implementing a series of Medi-Cal Rx policy updates to reduce pharmacy spending, improve program integrity, and ensure continued, equitable access to quality pharmacy benefits and services.

This Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) document provides clarification to members regarding policy updates to GLP-1 drugs.

1. **What happened to GLP-1 drug coverage on January 1, 2026?**

   The policy as of January 1, 2026, is that Medi-Cal Rx no longer approves requests, called prior authorizations (PAs), for GLP-1 drugs when they are used for weight loss only. GLP-1 drugs that are no longer covered by Medi-Cal Rx for weight loss include:

   - Wegovy®
   - Zepbound®
   - Saxenda®
   - Ozempic®
   - Rybelsus®
   - Mounjaro®
   - Victoza®
   - Byetta
   - Bydureon®
   - Trulicity®

   Notes:

   - **GLP-1 drugs may still be covered for conditions other than weight loss, such as type 2 diabetes. Some conditions may require the member's pharmacy provider or prescriber to submit a PA request for approval. Saxenda is excluded.**
   - Medi-Cal members who are younger than 21 years of age and need a GLP-1 drug for weight loss may be eligible for coverage if the member's pharmacy provider or prescriber submits a PA request and it is approved due to federal requirements.

2. **What are GLP-1 drugs?**

   Glucagon-like peptide-1, or GLP-1, drugs can help with some health problems, including type 2 diabetes, by copying a natural hormone in the body called GLP-1. GLP-1 drugs are usually given as a shot once a day or once a week.

3. **What is a PA request?**

   A PA is a request submitted by your pharmacy provider or prescriber as part of a pre-approval process for Medi-Cal Rx to pay for certain pharmacy drugs and medical supplies. You can call the Medi-Cal Rx Customer Service Center (CSC) at 1-800-977-2273 to ask about the status of your PA requests submitted by your pharmacy provider or prescriber.

4. **Why did Medi-Cal Rx remove GLP-1 drugs from coverage for weight loss?**

   DHCS made changes to Medi-Cal Rx to lower pharmacy costs, strengthen oversight, and ensure fair access to quality pharmacy services. These updates are part of California's enacted 2025-26 State Budget.

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5. What do I do if I am already taking a GLP-1 drug for weight loss?

If you currently take a GLP-1 drug for weight loss only, talk to your doctor about other ways to help you lose weight and improve your health. Alternate options to support your health might include other drugs, diet changes, exercise, and counseling.

6. Can I still get a GLP-1 drug for health problems other than weight loss?

Yes, you may still be able to get a GLP-1 drug for other health problems. Your pharmacy provider or prescriber can send a PA request to Medi-Cal Rx to show that the drug is needed for other health problems and Medi-Cal Rx will review it for coverage.

Talk to your pharmacy provider or prescriber about submitting a PA request if you take one of the following GLP-1 drugs:

- Wegovy for cardiovascular disease
- Zepbound for obstructive sleep apnea (OSA)

If you take Ozempic, Rybelsus, Mounjaro, Victoza, Byetta, Bydureon, or Trulicity for type 2 diabetes, or Wegovy for noncirrhotic metabolic dysfunction-associated steatohepatitis (MASH), it will continue to be covered if your pharmacy provider or prescriber submits a diagnosis code with your prescription. If you take these drugs for other health problems, talk to your doctor.

7. My child is younger than 21 years of age and currently takes a GLP-1 drug for weight loss; is their drug covered?

If a member who is younger than 21 years of age needs a GLP-1 drug for weight loss, it will continue to be covered if your pharmacy provider or prescriber submits a PA request and it is approved, due to federal Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic, and Treatment (EPSDT) benefit requirements.

Note: This applies regardless of California Children's Services (CCS) enrollment.

8. What do I do if I am denied my GLP-1 drug?

Medi-Cal members who receive a Notice of Action (NOA) denying coverage for GLP-1 drugs have the right to a State Hearing. Generally, Medi-Cal members have 90 days from the date of the NOA to file a request with the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) for a State Hearing, as communicated in the State Hearing rights provided with the NOA. If you want continued coverage for a medication you are currently taking that is under dispute, generally you need to submit a State Hearing request within 10 days of receipt of the NOA and identify that you are requesting aid to continue use of the medication while the hearing is pending. Coverage may continue pending a State Hearing decision until the earlier of:

- The end of the period covered by their current PA; **OR**
- The date on which a hearing decision is rendered; **OR**
- The date on which the hearing is otherwise withdrawn or closed.

For additional information and requirement deadlines, refer to the Medi-Cal Fair Hearing page on the DHCS website.

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9. **If I already have an approved PA for a GLP-1 drug for weight loss only, can I still get the drug after January 1, 2026?**

   The policy as of January 1, 2026, is that if you take a GLP-1 drug for weight loss, the drug is no longer covered as of January 1, 2026, even if you already had an approved PA. Any existing approved PAs for these drugs and for weight loss-related indications expired on December 31, 2025.

10. **Can I choose to pay for a GLP-1 drug myself?**

    Yes. Effective January 1, 2026, you can pay out of pocket for GLP-1 drugs at the pharmacy. You might also be able to use discount cards that work for Medi-Cal members, which could help lower the cost.

    Note: Medi-Cal Rx will not pay you back for GLP-1 drugs you buy yourself if they are used for weight loss since it is no longer a covered benefit as of January 1, 2026.

11. **What did Medi-Cal Rx do to get members ready for this change?**

    Medi-Cal Rx continues to share information with pharmacy providers, prescribers, and other stakeholders about the changes to coverage for GLP-1 drugs used for weight loss.

    Medi-Cal Rx also sent an Important Plan Information letter to all Medi-Cal Rx members announcing this update.

12. **I received a letter saying GLP-1 drugs will no longer be covered for weight loss as of January 1, 2026. I do not take this drug; why did I get this letter?**

    Medi-Cal Rx sent the Important Plan Information letter to all Medi-Cal Rx members. If you do not take a GLP-1 drug, you do not need to take action.

13. **How can I learn more about these changes?**

    You can visit the Medi-Cal Rx Member Portal to review the following resources:

    - A copy of the Important Plan Information letter that was mailed to all members
    - *Changes to GLP-1 Drug Coverage – Effective January 1, 2026* flyer
    - This *GLP-1 Drugs – Medi-Cal Rx Members' Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)* document

    You can also contact Medi-Cal Rx via the following methods:

    - **By Phone:** Call the CSC at 1-800-977-2273, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days per year.
    - **By Email:** Send an email to the Medi-Cal Rx Education and Outreach team at MediCalRxEducationOutreach@primetherapeutics.com.
    - **By Message or Chat:** Visit the Contact Us page on the Medi-Cal Rx Web Portal.

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