



THE PRESCRIBER e-LETTER

Standing Orders for Dispensing Over-the-counter Prenatal Vitamins and Over-the-counter Oral Hormonal Birth Control

Summary

- MassHealth has issued standing orders for prenatal vitamins and over-the-counter (OTC) oral hormonal birth control.
- Licensed pharmacists may utilize these standing orders to provide access to covered OTC prenatal vitamin and OTC oral hormonal birth control products for MassHealth members or Health Safety Net (HSN) patients without a prescription.

Standing Orders for Dispensing Over-the-counter Prenatal Vitamins

MassHealth has issued a standing order for OTC prenatal vitamins. This standing order allows pharmacists to dispense OTC prenatal vitamins to MassHealth members or HSN patients free of charge without a prescription. Pharmacists must follow a protocol within the standing order to educate patients on counseling points and contraindications.

Prenatal vitamins are an important part of prenatal care to help ensure that the parent and baby get the nutrients needed during pregnancy and breastfeeding. Prenatal vitamins or multivitamins containing ≥ 400 mcg of folic acid are recommended for any individual of reproductive age who is capable of becoming pregnant, considering pregnancy, attempting to become pregnant, is pregnant, or is nursing.¹

Covered prenatal vitamins through the standing order include any covered orally administered prenatal or multivitamin containing ≥ 400 mcg of folic acid. Pharmacists may dispense up to a 90 days' supply to members.

Pharmacists have been provided with a prenatal vitamin recommendation flowchart in the standing order. The pharmacist must ask if the patient is pregnant or planning on becoming pregnant, nursing, if they have a history of neural tube defects, or if there is a possibility the patient will become pregnant. The appropriate dose of folic acid in the prenatal vitamin is then determined based on the responses to these questions.

As directed in the standing order, pharmacists must review counseling points, contraindications, and always counsel the individual to follow up and consult with their primary care physician or obstetrician/gynecologist.

Please refer to M.G.L. c. 118E, § 84 for further information on this standing order. Here is the link to the standing order: mass.gov/doc/standing-order-prenatal-vitamins-0/download

Standing Order for Dispensing Over-the-counter Oral Hormonal Contraceptives

MassHealth has issued a standing order for OTC oral hormonal contraceptives. This standing order authorizes pharmacists to dispense OTC oral hormonal contraceptives to any MassHealth member or HSN patient who states that they are of reproductive potential and age who wish to prevent pregnancy.

Oral hormonal birth control, when taken correctly, can help reduce the likelihood of unwanted pregnancy.² In July 2023, Opill® (norgestrel) was the first FDA approved OTC oral contraceptive. Opill® (norgestrel) is covered on the MassHealth Drug List and included on the MassHealth OTC covered product list.

Covered OTC oral hormonal birth control through the standing order includes norgestrel 0.075 mg tablet. Pharmacists may dispense up to a 365 days' supply to members.

Pharmacists must counsel members on the importance of consistent timing of dose and what to do if a dose is missed. Pharmacists must also counsel members that OTC oral hormonal contraceptives should not be used for emergency contraception and do not protect against HIV/AIDS.

Pharmacists must check for drug-drug interactions and counsel the member on contraindications (e.g., pregnancy, breast cancer, uterine bleeding, liver tumors, liver disease). The pharmacist is also instructed to counsel on use, administration, and side effects. Pharmacists utilizing this standing order must advise the patient to follow up and consult with their primary care physician or obstetrician/gynecologist.

Please refer to M.G.L. c. 118E, § 83 for further information on this standing order. Here is the link to the standing order: [mass.gov/doc/standing-order-over-the-counter-oral-hormonal-birth-control-0/download](https://www.mass.gov/doc/standing-order-over-the-counter-oral-hormonal-birth-control-0/download)

References

1. Folic Acid Supplementation to Prevent Neural Tube Defects: Updated Evidence Report and Systematic Review for the US Preventive Services Task Force. Viswanathan M, Urrutia RP, Hudson KN, Middleton JC, Kahwati LC. JAMA. 2023;330(5):460.
2. Opill® [consumer information leaflet on the internet]. Allegan (MI): Perrigo; 2023. [cited 2024 Nov 1]. Available from: https://cdn.shopify.com/s/files/1/0753/6653/1352/files/Consumer_Information_Leaflet.pdf?v=1709218835

The Prescriber e-Letter is an update designed to enhance the transparency and efficiency of the MassHealth drug prior-authorization (PA) process and the MassHealth Drug List. Each issue highlights key clinical information and updates to the MassHealth Drug List. The Prescriber E-Letter was prepared by the MassHealth Drug Utilization Review Program and the MassHealth Pharmacy Program.