

Phase-out of CFC Asthma Inhalers to Increase Member Co-Payments

In April of 2005, the United States Food and Drug Administration announced that, after December 31, 2008, Albuterol inhalers containing chlorofluorocarbon (CFC) propellants could no longer be produced or marketed. They based this decision on concerns that CFCs harm the environment.

Manufacturers have begun producing inhalers using a new, more environmentally friendly propellant known as HFA. Some patients using inhalers may have begun using the new product, but CFC inhalers are still widely used.

The largest producer of CFC inhalers, Warrick Pharmaceuticals, will stop manufacturing CFC inhalers in early 2007, requiring patients to switch to the new HFA-based inhalers, as CFC inhalers will be in short supply during the beginning of the year.

Patients using inhalers will need new prescriptions from the doctor, since the CFC-based and HFA-based inhalers are not considered chemically identical. Since the HFA products are considered a new medication, they will not be available as generics for the foreseeable future. As a result, the brand-name co-payment, either for formulary or non-formulary medications will be charged, both at the retail pharmacy and through the mail order program.

Please contact the CSA Welfare Fund if you have any questions about this change in medications.