

Managing the treatment of arthritis & pain

## COX-2 INHIBITOR

*Preauthorization programs typically target drugs that may be unnecessary and costly for the vast majority of patients. One such program involves COX-2 drugs.*

### **What are COX-2 drugs?**

COX-2 is a category of drugs that is relatively new and includes the brand-name drug Celebrex. They work similarly to naproxen and ibuprofen in treating inflammation and reducing pain. Naproxen and ibuprofen belong to a group of drugs called NSAIDs — non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs. In most cases, NSAIDs are as effective as COX-2 drugs, but generic NSAIDs are far less expensive.

### **Why are COX-2 drugs targeted in the Preauthorization Program?**

Clinical studies show that NSAIDs are a safe and effective treatment option for most patients. Studies also suggest that COX-2 medications may be an appropriate treatment for patients who are at higher risk for stomach ulcers. Unfortunately, the vast majority of patients — with no or low risk for stomach ulcers — continue to take COX-2 drugs needlessly when NSAIDs may be the more cost-effective treatment option.

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Because brand-name COX-2 medications are several times more expensive than generic NSAIDs, they generally cost a health plan, your employer and you considerably more money.

The ultimate decision between selecting an NSAID or a COX-2 drug rests with you and your doctor. Preauthorization gives you and your doctor a tool to make the right decision based on:

- Better health
- Lower out-of-pocket cost — lower copayment or coinsurance
- Built-in safety/protection

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