

# ADDRESSING STEP THERAPY AND NON-MEDICAL SWITCHING



Chronic  
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## ***What is step therapy?***

Step therapy, also known as “fail first,” is a practice health plans use to reduce their costs. Under these policies, patients must first try and fail using a generic, less expensive medication before they are able to advance a “step” to a medication that may be more expensive but was prescribed by their doctor. Patients can be forced to try and fail on several medications before they are able to access the most effective treatment.

## ***What is non-medical switching?***

Non-medical switching is the practice of changing a patient’s prescribed medication for reasons other than medical necessity. These include cost, insurance plan preference or other non-health-related factors.

## ***How does step therapy and non-medical switching impact patient with chronic diseases?***

Doctors know their patients’ medical history the best. Even when two patients have the same diagnosis, different medications may be needed based on factors such as age and other conditions. Step therapy practices can make patients sicker for longer by making them take the wrong medicine before they are given the right medicine. Non-medical switching can also be ineffective or lead to unnecessary side effects.



“At random times, what’s covered and what’s not will change without notification. They now want you to try something else for 90 days, but we already know the other [treatment] worked. Now I must experiment on my body and deal with the side effects even though I have a medication that I know works. -Michelle Johnson, CDC Ambassador, Illinois

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