

# ConsumerRx<sup>®</sup>

## Multiple Sclerosis

### What is Multiple Sclerosis (MS)?

MS is a disease where the protective coating on nerves is attacked by the immune system. This disrupts the body's ability to send information through the nerves. When the communication between the brain and certain organs is interrupted it can lead to problems with coordination, weakness and even blindness.

### Is medication helpful for treating MS?

There are four types of MS, medication has only been proven helpful for Relapsing-Remitting MS (RRMS). In other types of MS these medications show no benefit or inconsistent benefits. In RRMS people have attacks, followed by periods of improvement. As the attacks become more severe, permanent disability may occur. People with MS should take their medication regularly to try to prevent attacks and potential disability.

### What are my medication options?

Medication	Preferred	How Often	Approximate cost per 30 days
Avonex <sup>®</sup>	Yes	Once a week	\$1,471
Betaseron <sup>®</sup>	Non-Preferred with PA*	Every other day	\$1,578
Copaxone <sup>®</sup>	Yes	Every day	\$1,500
Rebif <sup>®</sup>	Yes	3 times a week	\$1,637

\* PA refers to Prior Authorization

### How are these medications used and how well do they work?

- All of these medications are generally self-injected, either under the skin or into muscle.
- These medications have all been shown to decrease the number of MS attacks.
- There are no differences among Avonex, Betaseron or Rebif in slowing down the rate at which people become disabled.

### Are there differences in side effects?

Any of the medications can cause side effects, including injection site reactions. Avonex, Rebif and Betaseron may cause flu like symptoms and may worsen depression in individuals who are already depressed. Some individuals using Copaxone may experience a temporary reaction immediately after injecting Copaxone. This reaction may include flushing, chest tightness, heart palpitations, anxiety or shortness of breath.

### Why does Betaseron require prior authorization?

Betaseron is more expensive than other formulary/preferred medications, but has no additional benefit.

### Are there other medications that can be used for MS?

Tysabri<sup>®</sup> and Novantrone<sup>®</sup> are sometimes used for MS, but because of significant safety concerns they are only used when other medications have not been successful. They are not self-injected like other MS medications, so they must be administered in a doctor's office. Tysabri may increase the risk for a serious and potentially fatal viral infection in the brain called progressive multifocal leukoencephalopathy (PML). Post-marketing reports for Novantrone include impaired heart function that can occur at any time or an increase in risk for a type of cancer called acute myelogenous leukemia (AML).

## **The Bottom Line**

Avonex, Copaxone and Rebif provide the best values among treatments available for MS.

*Note: Since many medication options are available, our physicians and pharmacists developed this to provide you with information about the available alternatives, as well as potential advantages and lack of advantages of the various products. This medication summary was developed based upon an evaluation of information from the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA), scientific studies, and input from practicing doctors and specialists.*



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