

Benefits Bulletin

Information Update for Group Benefits Plan Members

NATURAL HEALTH PRODUCTS REGULATION

In 2004, the Natural Health Products Directorate – a division of Health Canada - introduced a set of *Natural Health Products Regulations* to help ensure that the natural health products available to Canadians are safe, effective and of high quality.

As a result, all products that now fall under the Natural Health Products (NHPs) umbrella must have a valid Natural Product Number (NPN) or Homeopathic Medicine Number (DIN-HM). Health Canada advised manufacturers that they have until December 31, 2009 to obtain a product license under the NHP Regulations for any natural health products that currently have a valid Drug Identification Number (DIN).

Effective January 1, 2010, products that no longer have a valid drug identification number (DIN) will be deemed ineligible for reimbursement under your Manulife Financial Group Benefits plan.

Products that fall under the *Natural Health Products Regulations* include:

- smoking cessation products (e.g. Nicoderm patches, Nicorette gum);
- alcohol swabs;
- vitamins and minerals;
- herbal remedies;
- homeopathic medicines;
- traditional medicines such as traditional Chinese medicines;
- probiotics; and
- other products like amino acids and essential fatty acids.



Look for the number:

Any product approved by Health Canada will have one of the following three numbers on its label:

- **Drug Identification Number (DIN):** an eight-digit numerical code following the acronym DIN assigned to each drug product marketed under, or in accordance with, the Food and Drugs Act and Regulations.
- **Natural Product Number (NPN):** an eight-digit numerical code following the acronym NPN assigned to each natural health product approved to be marketed under the Natural Health Products Regulations.
- **Homeopathic Medicine Number (DIN-HM):** an eight-digit numerical code following the acronym DIN-HM assigned to each homeopathic medicine approved to be marketed under the Natural Health Products Regulations.

How does the change affect me?

If your plan provides coverage for over-the-counter (OTC) products purchased on prescription, as of January 1, 2010, only those products with a valid Drug Identification Number (DIN) will be eligible for reimbursement under your plan.

In Quebec, products assigned NPNs that are considered eligible expenses under the Régie de l'assurance maladie du Québec (RAMQ) will continue to be covered. Products not considered eligible expenses on a drug formulary however, are considered eligible expenses under RAMQ will continue to be covered up to the minimum RAMQ requirements as per RAMQ legislation.

For more information on the Health Products Regulations you can visit

<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/dhp-mps/prodnatur/index-eng.php>

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