



# HEALTH CORNER



## Fast-Tracking Access to Six Breakthrough Cancer Drugs

The Ontario government is continuing to lead the world in cancer care by approving access to six new life-extending cancer treatments through the Funding Accelerated for Specific Treatments (FAST) program. This first-in-Canada initiative is fast-tracking access to breakthrough cancer drugs, giving patients in need faster access to life-changing treatment options. This bold initiative will continue to connect patients to life-saving cancer treatments almost a full year sooner, as part of the government's plan to protect Ontario's health-care system.

"For every Ontarian facing a cancer diagnosis, timely access to high-quality treatment can make all the difference," said Sylvia Jones, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health. "Through the FAST program, we're accelerating access to life-saving therapies across the province, bringing hope, peace of mind, and transformative care to those who need it most."

Since October 2025, six cancer drugs have now been accelerated for funding through the FAST pilot, giving cancer patients access to the following life-saving treatments:

TAGRISSO: Used to treat lung cancer

SCEMBLIX: Used to treat a type of leukemia

NUBEQA: Used to treat prostate cancer

CALQUENCE: Used to treat lymphoma

OPDIVO with YERVOY: Combination therapy used to treat a type of colorectal cancer

OPDIVO with YERVOY: Combination therapy used to treat a type of liver cancer

Building on this momentum, Ontario expects to fast-track additional cancer drug approvals in the coming months. Canadian patients currently wait nearly two years to access new publicly funded medicines – a full year longer than patients in other developed countries. The FAST program accelerates this process by expediting access to seven to ten high-priority cancer drugs every year, helping Ontario patients receive publicly funded treatments up to one year sooner.

FAST prioritizes medicines approved through Project Orbis, an international initiative that fast-tracks regulatory review for promising cancer therapies. This innovative approach puts patients first and ensures they can receive timely access to the life-changing treatments they need. By removing unnecessary delays, Ontario is leading the way in rethinking how cancer care can be delivered, here in Ontario and across the world.

Through Your Health: A Plan for Connected and Convenient Care, Ontario continues to modernize the health-care system and expand access to critical services, ensuring patients receive the right care, at the right time.

The Ontario Drug Benefit (ODB) Program is one of the most generous drug benefit programs in Canada, providing coverage for approximately 5,900 drug products and therapeutic treatments on the ODB Formulary for approximately 9 million Ontarians.

Drugs that are not listed in the ODB Formulary may be considered for coverage on a case-by-case basis through the Exceptional Access Program, which includes nearly 1,500 drugs, upon meeting specified criteria.

The FAST program is a three-year pilot and will be evaluated to identify opportunities to improve patient experience, assess its scope and ensure long-term sustainability.

Last year, Ontario invested \$9.5 billion to support the Ontario Drug Benefit program, including approximately \$2.75 billion for cancer drugs and supportive therapies in the community.

In January 2025, Ontario and the Government of Canada signed a three-year agreement to improve care for people with rare diseases. Ontario is receiving \$178 million through the National Strategy for Drugs for Rare Diseases to enhance early screening, diagnostics, and access to treatments—building on the province's \$489 million investment over the past year to fund 55 rare disease drugs through its public drug programs.

"Innovative Medicines Canada (IMC) applauds the Government of Ontario for delivering on its promise to accelerate access to life-extending cancer treatments for Ontarians. This announcement is an important milestone for patients and the health system alike. We look forward to working in partnership with Ontario to deliver a successful FAST program and to advance similar initiatives across the country. By leading the way on FAST, Ontario is setting a clear standard for the rest of the country — demonstrating how timely access to innovative medicines can be achieved, especially as Canada navigates the new U.S. policy on most-favoured nation drug pricing."

- Dr. Bettina Hamelin

President and CEO, Innovative Medicines Canada



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## Stronger from the Inside Out

Common Sense Health – Diana Gifford-Jones



Why is it the face lines of aging men can make them handsome while a wrinkled female face needs improvement? That double standard should be put to bed. Nevertheless, looking and feeling younger is not a cosmetic matter, for women or men. Studies show that "feeling younger", or perceiving oneself as younger, correlates with better health outcomes.

A study of three large longitudinal U.S. samples found that people who felt older than their real age had a 24% higher risk of mortality compared with those who felt younger. Researchers following over 6,000 people in the U.K., found a rate of death of 14.3% for those who felt 3 or more years younger than their age, compared with 24.6% for those who felt older.

Feeling younger is a worthwhile goal! That's why collagen supplements are big business, promising to make you look younger by helping keep skin firm and hydrated. But the real health story isn't at the surface.

The body is comprised of tens of thousands of different proteins that conduct all kinds of functions. Collagen is the most abundant of them, accounting for nearly a third of all the protein we have. It's the glue that holds us together, forming the scaffolding for our skin, joints, bones, tendons, blood vessels, and even the lining of our gut. It gives tissues their shape, flexibility, and ability to repair themselves when stressed or injured.

But starting in our 40s, our fibroblasts – the cells that produce collagen – slow down. The fibers they create lose structure and strength. Declining collagen means joints feel stiffer, muscles recover more slowly, and tissues take longer to heal. Blood vessels lose some of their elasticity. Even digestion can be affected, as the gut lining depends on collagen. Aging, in other words, begins from within.

Collagen supplements have surged in popularity, with sales climbing every year. Many forms require large doses – up to ten grams daily – usually consumed as powders. Capsules are more convenient, but few deliver enough active material to make a measurable difference.

An exception is the new generation of marine collagens. When buying it, look for the ingredient Cartidys, a hydrolyzed Type II collagen derived from the cartilage of sustainably caught skate fish in northern France. The collagen is extracted using only water. No chemicals. And the cartilage itself is upcycled from fish already harvested for food. It's a clean, environmentally responsible source.

What makes this marine collagen distinct is its composition. Cartidys doesn't just supply collagen. It naturally contains other compounds that are key building blocks for joint cartilage, skin elasticity, and hydration. And it's been produced to facilitate absorption by the body, so only two capsules a day yield effective benefits.

In a 90-day study involving women aged 45 to 59, those who took 500 milligrams of Cartidys daily showed a 38% increase in skin dermis density leading to a 26% reduction in crow's feet wrinkles around the eyes and a 31% reduction in laugh line wrinkles. Those are the measures that are easy to see on the surface, and signal stronger connective tissue everywhere collagen is functioning in the body.

We'll all get wrinkles and that's not a bad thing. Every line tells a story. But there's nothing wrong with fighting back if it helps you feel younger. If you're looking to boost collagen naturally, make sure you are getting enough vitamin C and lysine, the essential building blocks of collagen formation. If you choose a collagen supplement, make it a high-quality one – clean, clinically tested, and built on real science. That's the smart way to age strong from the inside out.

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