



Advice for patients about obtaining ongoing supplies of medicines without a current prescription during the COVID-19 pandemic

The Chief Health Officer has issued a Notice under emergency provisions of the Public Health Act.

The temporary arrangement allows patients to obtain ongoing supplies of prescribed medicines if they are unable to see a doctor or are limiting time spent outside of their home.

Patients already under treatment with medicines will be able to obtain standard one-month quantities of required medicines from community pharmacies if the pharmacist is satisfied that treatment is urgently needed.

The new arrangement applies to all medicines with the exception of controlled drugs.

Frequently Asked Questions

What should I do if I have run out of my medicines and I can't see a doctor because I have been advised to stay at home and minimise time I spend outside?

If you are unable to see a doctor 'face-to-face' to obtain a prescription, you should check whether they can provide a telehealth appointment by either phone or video. If they cannot, you should talk to a community pharmacist about other options. This does not have to be your usual pharmacist.

Do I have to see my doctor to get a follow-up prescription to give to the pharmacist?

You will not need to obtain a follow-up prescription for those medicines that can be supplied under these new temporary arrangements.

Can someone else obtain medicines for me under these arrangements?

Yes, but they will need to be able to explain what you need and why to the pharmacist, so the pharmacist can verify that the supply is appropriate and safe. If possible provide any documents you may have about the medicines you need e.g. My Health Record print-out or the medicine pack that has a label with your details on it to pass on to the pharmacist. The pharmacist will keep a record of your details and what medicines are supplied.

What medicines can I get?

These new temporary arrangements will apply to most PBS/RPBS medicines supplied by community pharmacies, which represent more than 70 per cent of all PBS listed items, including medicines used for asthma, lung disease, diabetes, heart disease, and mental illness. Please note that medicines supplied under section 100 Special Supply Arrangements are not available under these arrangements. This includes Human Immunodeficiency Viruses (HIV) medicines available through the Highly Specialised Drugs Program.

What will I have to pay for these medicines?

You will have to pay the relevant PBS/RPBS co-payment, depending on your concessional status. The current co-payment levels are \$6.60 for concessional persons and up to \$41.00 for general persons.

For non-PBS medicines you will need to pay the cost that the pharmacy charges for the medicine.

Will these medicines count towards my PBS/RPBS Safety Net?

In most cases, these medicines will count towards your PBS/RPBS Safety Net.

However, for certain PBS medicines, there is a Safety Net 20-day rule. This means that for certain PBS medicines a resupply within 20 days of having the previous medicine supplied will not count towards your Safety Net. If you had already reached the Safety Net threshold, you will need to pay the relevant pre-Safety Net PBS co-payment, not the reduced Safety Net amount. Your pharmacist will be able to discuss this further with you if this is relevant.

Will I be able to get my next supply of my medicines without a prescription?

A PBS-subsidised medicine can only be supplied once in a 12-month period under these arrangements. You will need to ensure that you speak to a doctor to get a prescription for any future supplies of PBS-subsidised medicines. There may be other options available to you which you can discuss with your medical practitioner or pharmacist, however you may need to pay the full price charged by the pharmacy.

What do I do if I have lost my Medicare or Concession Card?

The pharmacist can contact Services Australia for assistance on getting this information. Alternatively, members of the general public can contact Services Australia on 132 011.

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