



Expansion of the Closing the Gap Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme Co-payment Program – Frequently asked Questions

What is the Closing the Gap (CTG) Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) Co-payment Program?

The CTG PBS Co-payment Program improves access to affordable PBS medicines for First Nations people living with, or at risk of, chronic disease, and who in their doctor's opinion, would experience setbacks in the prevention or ongoing management of chronic disease if they did not take their prescribed medicine and would be unlikely to adhere to their medicines regimen without assistance through the program.

The cost of medicines remains a significant barrier to access for First Nations people. Under the CTG PBS Co-payment Program, eligible First Nations people who are registered on the CTG PBS Co-payment Register and who would normally pay the full general PBS co-payment amount, pay the concessional rate when obtaining PBS medicines from their local community pharmacy, approved medical practitioner, or private or public hospital. Eligible patients who would normally pay the concessional rate receive their PBS medicines for free without having to pay a co-payment.

In May 2024, it was announced, as part of the 2024-25 Budget, that the CTG PBS Co-payment Program will be expanded to cover all PBS medicines dispensed by community pharmacies, approved medical practitioners, and private or public hospitals.

When will the changes take effect?

Changes to the CTG PBS Co-payment Program commenced from 1 July 2024 to expand the program to all PBS medicines dispensed by community pharmacies, approved medical practitioners, and private hospitals. The program will be further expanded from 1 January 2025 to apply to all PBS medicines dispensed by public hospitals.



What is changing?

- Prior to 1 July 2024, the CTG PBS Co-payment Program only applied to section 85 or 'general schedule' PBS medicines, when dispensed by a community pharmacy, approved medical practitioner or private hospital.
- From 1 July 2024, the program has been expanded to also apply to section 100 PBS medicines dispensed by community pharmacies, approved medical practitioners or private hospitals.
- This also includes all section 100 PBS medicines supplied under Continued Dispensing arrangements.
- From 1 January 2025, the CTG PBS Co-payment Program further expanded to include all PBS medicines (including section 85 and section 100 medicines) dispensed by public hospitals.

What additional PBS medicines are now covered under the CTG PBS Co-payment Program?

- Additional PBS medicines covered by the expanded CTG PBS Co-payment Program encompass all PBS medicines included under the following five Section 100 Programs:
 - **Highly Specialised Drugs Program** – which includes opioid dependence treatment, hepatitis B, and HIV antiretroviral medicines.
 - **Efficient Funding of Chemotherapy Program**
 - **Botulinum Toxin Program**
 - **PBS Growth Hormone Program**
 - **In Vitro Fertilization (IVF) Program**

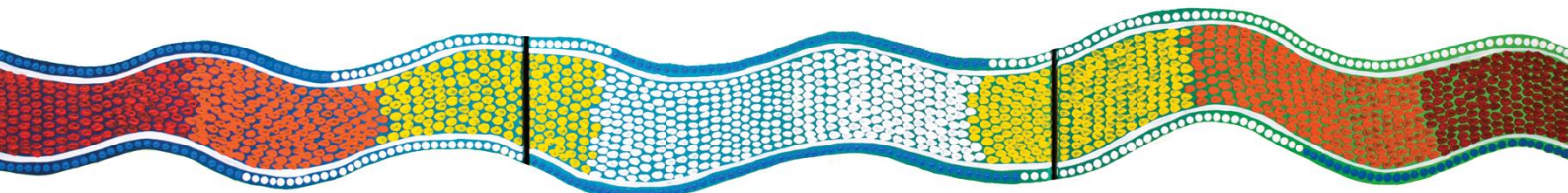
Details of each of these programs can be found on the PBS website at: www.pbs.gov.au

What do the changes mean for patients?

- Eligible CTG patients will now benefit from a reduced co-payment or no co-payment for all their PBS medicines in all treatment settings and locations where PBS medicines are available.

What is not changing?

- The changes to the CTG PBS Co-payment Program only relate to the range of available PBS medicines covered by the program. There will be no changes to current PBS medicine supply arrangements for community pharmacies, approved medical practitioners, and private or public hospitals.
- In NSW or the ACT, the changes from 1 January 2025 only applies for those public hospitals which are currently approved to supply certain PBS medicines.
- Public hospitals in NSW or ACT, which are approved under section 94 of the *National Health Act 1953* to supply section 100 PBS medicines under the Highly Specialised Drugs Program and/or trastuzumab under the Efficient Funding of Chemotherapy Program will be able to provide benefits to CTG patients for those PBS medicines only.



How do First Nations people register for the program?

- There are no changes to how eligible First Nations people are registered for the program.
- Eligible First Nations people can be registered for the program no matter where they live, and regardless of their health status.
- Any PBS prescriber or AHPRA registered First Nations Health Practitioner registered with Medicare as a provider can register eligible First Nations people for the program.
- Registration of eligible First Nations people is via the Health Professional Online Services (HPOS) managed by Services Australia and covers patients even if they move to a different health clinic.
- Eligible First Nations people will need to be registered for the program before a reduced co-payment can be applied to any PBS script when being dispensed.
- Although PBS prescribers are not legally required to write or electronically print 'CTG' on eligible PBS scripts for registered First Nations patients, annotation of a PBS script will help community and hospital pharmacists, when dispensing the medicines, to know that the patient is registered and eligible to receive benefits under the CTG PBS Co-payment Program.
- The PBS Online claiming system will verify an eligible First Nations person's registration status in real time. If the "Closing the Gap" field in the dispensing system has been completed, this will trigger the correct pricing.
- The program continues to be for self-identified First Nations people of any age, and no other patient groups. First Nations people need to be assessed by their health practitioner as being eligible for program registration.
- Eligible First Nations people not registered for the program will need to talk to their health practitioner to see if they are eligible for registration.

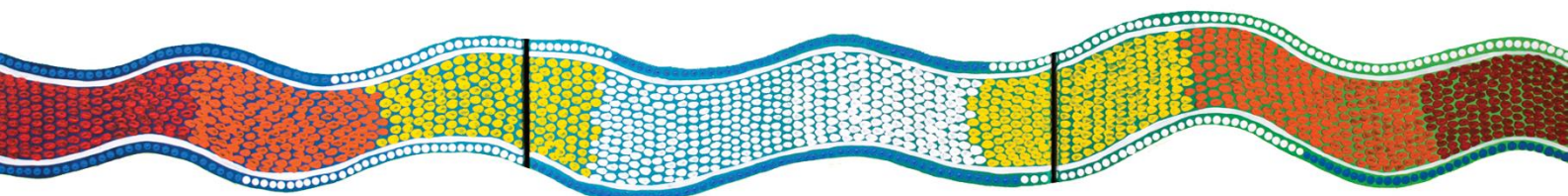
What are the eligibility criteria for people to be registered for the program?

People eligible for registration are those who:

- identify themselves to their health practitioner as a First Nations person;
- in the opinion of their health practitioner, would experience setbacks in the prevention or ongoing management of a condition if they did not adhere to a course of treatment;
- in the opinion of their health practitioner would be unlikely to adhere to the course of treatment without assistance from the program; and
- are enrolled with Medicare.

What if First Nations people no longer want to be registered for the program?

Registered patients can phone Services Australia on 132 290 or go to a Service Centre or Access Point to advise they no longer wish to be registered for the program.



How much will First Nations people registered for the program pay for PBS medicines?

First Nations people who are registered for the program but do not have a Concession Card will pay \$7.70 (current as of 1 January 2024) for the majority[†] of their PBS medicines.

If registered First Nations people have a Concession Card, they will receive the majority[†] of their PBS medicines for free.

[†] Where a brand premium applies to the PBS medicine being supplied this will be payable by the patient in addition to any PBS co-payment at the time of dispensing.

What medicines are covered under the program?

From 1 July 2024 the CTG PBS Co-payment Program applies to prescriptions for all PBS medicines dispensed by community pharmacies, approved medical practitioners, and private hospitals. This includes all general schedule (section 85) PBS medicines as well as section 100 PBS medicines (medicines supplied under a special supply arrangement established under section 100 of the *National Health Act 1953*).

From 1 January 2025, any PBS medicines supplied to CTG registered patients on discharge from a public hospital, are covered under the program. In NSW or ACT, public hospitals which are approved under section 94 of the *National Health Act 1953* to supply section 100 PBS medicines under the Highly Specialised Drugs Program and/or trastuzumab under the Efficient Funding of Chemotherapy Program, are able to provide benefits to CTG patients for those PBS medicines only.

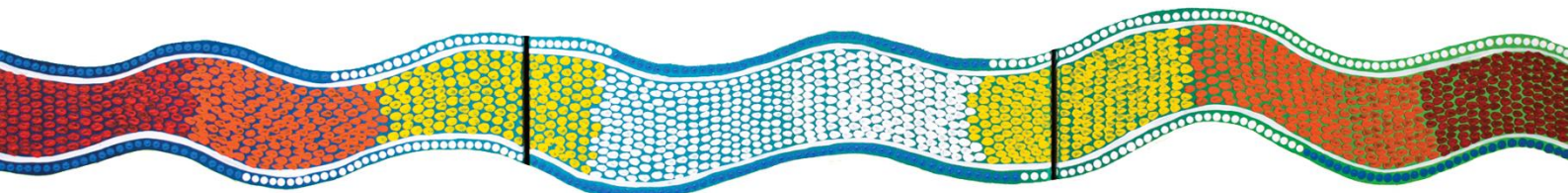
How can First Nations people find out if they are registered for the program?

If a patient is unsure whether they are registered for the CTG PBS Co-payment Program, their health practitioner or pharmacist will be able to check their registration status for them via Health Professional Online Services (HPOS).

What is the purpose of the “CTG” annotation on a PBS prescription?

PBS prescribers are no longer required to write or electronically print “CTG” on eligible PBS scripts for registered First Nations patients. However, should a PBS prescriber wish, annotation of a PBS script may help pharmacists recognise that a patient is registered for the CTG PBS Co-payment Program when dispensing that patient’s PBS medicines.

The PBS Online claiming system will verify an eligible First Nations person’s registration status in real time. If the ‘Closing the Gap’ field in the dispensing system has been completed, this will trigger the correct pricing.



Are PBS prescriptions that are not “CTG” annotated covered under the program?

If an eligible First Nations person is registered for the program at the time their PBS medicines are dispensed, the co-payment reduction will apply to a prescription for their PBS medicines even if the prescription does not have “CTG” annotation.

Although CTG annotation of PBS scripts is no longer required, continuation of this practice may assist community and hospital pharmacists to be aware that a PBS script is to be dispensed under the CTG PBS Co-payment Program.

How can health services or clinics in remote areas without internet access register eligible First Nations people for the program?

In remote areas with limited internet access, a health service or clinic can phone Services Australia on 132 290 to register a patient for the program.

Who can pharmacists direct dispensing software questions to?

Questions from pharmacists regarding changes to the dispensing software should be directed to their respective software vendor.

Where can pharmacists get help in relation to their PBS claims?

Pharmacists can obtain help in relation to a PBS claim by phoning Services Australia on 132 290.

