



**BC PharmaCare**

# **New Coverage Limits for Blood Glucose Test Strips**

**Effective January 1, 2015**

BC PharmaCare is limiting the number of blood glucose test strips it covers for a patient each calendar year. This change is based on research showing that more frequent blood glucose testing has a limited benefit for most people with diabetes who do not use insulin.

**Most people can test at the recommended frequency within the new limits.** If you need more than the annual limit of test strips, see page 2 for information on whether you might qualify for coverage of more strips.

**How is my annual limit determined?** Your annual limit will depend on the type of diabetes treatment you are receiving.

<b>Treatment category</b>	<b>Notes</b>	<b>Annual Quantity Limit</b>
<b>Managing diabetes with insulin</b>	If you take insulin, this higher limit applies whether or not you are also taking other diabetes medications.	<b>3,000</b>
<b>Managing diabetes with anti-diabetes medications with a high risk of causing hypoglycemia (that is, low blood sugar)</b>	Drugs with a higher risk of hypoglycemia include insulin secretagogues. Examples: glicazide (Diamicon®), glimepiride (Amaryl®), glyburide (DiaBeta®), nateglinide (Starlix®), repaglinide (Gluconorm®).	<b>400</b>
<b>Managing diabetes with anti-diabetes medications with a low risk of causing hypoglycemia (that is, low blood sugar)</b>	Drugs with a lower risk of hypoglycemia such as non-insulin secretagogues. Examples: acarbose (Glucobay®), exenatide (Byetta®), linagliptin (Trajenta™), liraglutide (Victoza®), long acting metformin (Glumetza®), metformin (Glucophage®), saxagliptin (onglyza®), sitagliptin (Januvia®)	<b>200</b>
<b>Managing diabetes through diet/lifestyle</b>		<b>200</b>

**Important:** If you fit in more than one of the categories above, the higher limit always applies.

**How will PharmaCare know which category I am in?** Each time you pick up a prescription, your pharmacy records the information in a computer network called PharmaNet. Based on this information, PharmaNet determines how your diabetes is being treated and applies the proper test strip limit. Each time you buy test strips, PharmaNet will check that you are still in the correct category. If your category changes, your annual limit for test strips is automatically updated.



**How will PharmaCare know if I reach the limit?** Each time you buy test strips, the number of strips you bought will be deducted from your yearly limit in the PharmaNet system. After the limits come into effect on January 1, 2015, if you are not sure how many strips you have bought during the year, contact Health Insurance BC at the telephone numbers below.

**Do I need to pay more attention to expiry dates?** Yes. To make the best use of your annual allowance for strips, make sure the expiry date on the strips you buy is far enough in the future.

**How often should I usually test my blood glucose level?** Along with your doctor and diabetes educator, there is a wealth of online resources to help you determine how often you need to test. For some of the best resources visit the:

- PharmaCare website at [www.gov.bc.ca/pharmacare/bloodglucoseteststrips.html](http://www.gov.bc.ca/pharmacare/bloodglucoseteststrips.html)
- Canadian Diabetes Association (CDA) website at [www.diabetes.ca/takecharge](http://www.diabetes.ca/takecharge).
- CDA Self-Monitoring of Blood Glucose calculator at <http://guidelines.diabetes.ca/BloodGlucoseLowering/smbgcalculatorpwd>

**What if I need to test more often?** In certain circumstances, you may need to test more often. Your doctor—or a health professional at a Diabetes Education Centre—can send a request to PharmaCare for coverage of additional strips, if you are **not using insulin** and you have:

- not met blood sugar level targets, as determined by a physician, for three months or more
- an acute illness or other conditions that may affect your blood glucose control
- had changes in your drug therapy that may affect your blood glucose control (such as starting or stopping medications that induce hypo- or hyperglycemia)
- a job where hypoglycemia presents a significant safety risk (e.g., pilots, air traffic controllers, commercial drivers)
- gestational diabetes.

Note: In the rare case that you have a medical need to test even more frequently, or if you take insulin and need to test more frequently, your endocrinologist can submit a request to PharmaCare for additional strips. Requests are considered on a case-by-case basis.

**Where can I get more information about the policy change?** Call Health Insurance BC.

From Vancouver, call **604-683-7151** | From the rest of B.C., call toll-free **1-800-663-7100**.

Customer Service Representatives are available: Monday to Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. (except statutory holidays) and Saturday 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. (except statutory holidays).

BC PharmaCare is the provincial drug insurance program. It helps British Columbians with the cost of eligible prescription drugs and certain medical supplies.