

# DRUG SHORTAGE LISTS FOR PHARMACARE BENEFITS

## USER GUIDE

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## OVERVIEW

### PURPOSE

The PharmaCare Drug Shortage Lists provide health professionals and the public with up-to-date information about **PharmaCare-covered drugs** that are in short supply at **community pharmacies in B.C.**

When a drug that PharmaCare covers is not available—or is in such short supply that some pharmacies may not be able to order it—the **Current Drug Shortages List** gives information on the PharmaCare coverage options available during the shortage.

Pharmacies can check this list to find out what alternate drugs, if any, that PharmaCare will cover during a shortage so they can order them. Prescribers and patients can use this list to find out which drugs will be covered.

The **Resolved Drug Shortages List** is a record of PharmaCare-covered drug shortages that have ended. When a shortage ends, PharmaCare switches back to its usual coverage for both the shorted drug and its temporary replacement drug.

Both lists are updated every business day.

### HOW IT WORKS

When a drug shortage is confirmed, PharmaCare:

1. Checks to see if it already covers another version of the same drug. If it does, PharmaCare provides information about these other versions in the Current Drug Shortage list.
2. If there is no already-covered drug available, PharmaCare looks for another commercially manufactured version of the drug as a replacement. If PharmaCare finds a replacement, it temporarily covers this alternate drug until the shortage ends. The alternate drug is covered **in the same way** as the shorted drug (for example, if the shorted drug required prior approval from PharmaCare’s Special Authority (SA), the alternate drug will also require prior SA approval).

Information on the replacement drug is given in the Alternate Drug section of the Current Drug Shortage list.

You can use the [Formulary Search tool](#) to find more information on how a drug is covered (e.g., the maximum price that PharmaCare covers and whether the drug requires prior Special Authority).

3. If PharmaCare cannot find a commercially manufactured alternate drug, it may decide to cover a compounded (made-to-order) drug on a last-resort basis during the shortage or it may advise patients and prescribers to consider alternate treatment plans. PharmaCare’s decision is detailed in the Alternate Drug section of the Current Drug Shortage list.

During a shortage, PharmaCare regularly checks on the status of the shorted drug and updates the Current Drug Shortages List as required.

When a manufacturer confirms that a drug is available again to wholesalers and pharmacies, PharmaCare updates the Current Drug Shortage with this information and with the day on which temporary coverage of the replacement drug will end.

On the day coverage of a replacement drug ends, information on the drug shortage is removed from the Current Drug Shortages List and moved to the **Resolved Drug Shortages List**.

## HOW THE INFORMATION IS PRESENTED

Details about current shortages and resolved shortages are provided in separate Excel spreadsheets. Both spreadsheets contain the same information, organized the same way.

Information for each drug is organized into three sections:

1. **Shorted drug** – provides information on the drug that is currently unavailable (see description of [Columns A through I](#) below)
2. **Alternate Drug** – provides information on the replacement drug that PharmaCare will cover temporarily during the shortage (see description of [Columns J through R](#) below)
3. **Notes** – provides additional information on either the shorted drug or the alternate drug(s) including compounding and other options (see description of [Column S](#) below)

[Column J](#) shows the date on which information about the **shorted drug and/or the alternate** was last updated.

## ONE DRUG, ONE ROW

Each shorted drug is listed by its unique [Drug Identification Number](#) (DIN); a separate row is created for each DIN.

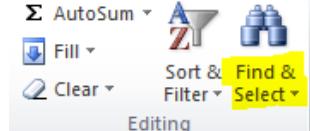
Each DIN may be listed more than once.

- If PharmaCare covers two or more alternate drugs for a single shorted drug, each alternate drug is listed in a separate row.
- If an alternate drug becomes unavailable or is in short supply, it will then also be listed as a shorted drug.

## DATE FORMAT

All dates are in YYYY-MM-DD format to make it easier to sort by date.

## FINDING DRUG INFORMATION FAST

To...	Sort by
<b>view the most recent additions and changes</b>	“Last updated on” (Column J) in descending order; the most recent updates should display at the top of the table.
<b>view the most recently reported shortages</b>	“Date reported” (Column A) in descending order; the most recent additions should display at the top of the table.
<b>find out which shortages are about to end (and thus when PharmaCare temporary coverage of the alternate drug will revert to its usual status)</b>	“Alternate full coverage end date” (Column R) in ascending order; the drugs whose coverage will end soonest should display at the top of the table.
<b>find a particular shorted drug</b>	Select: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• “Chemical name” (Column B), or</li><li>• “Brand or Trade name” (Column E)</li></ul> Then click on the <i>Find &amp; Select</i> tool in the Excel ribbon and type in the drug’s name. 

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**These definitions apply specifically to the PharmaCare drug shortage notification process.**

### **Active chemical ingredients**

the ingredient(s) in the drug that actually do the work, such as halting infections or relieving symptoms. Most drugs also contain non-active ingredients such as fillers.

### **Allocation, on allocation**

a method that drug manufacturers use to distribute a drug when it is in short supply. Pharmacies receive a proportional share of the limited supply based on their past order history. When a drug is available on allocation only, PharmaCare temporarily covers an alternate drug (if one is available) to ensure that patients receive the medication they need.

### **Alternate drug**

a drug that PharmaCare temporarily covers in place of a PharmaCare-covered drug that is currently in short supply. The alternate may be another generic drug or a brand name version of the drug. During the shortage, PharmaCare temporarily covers the alternate drug **in the same way as it covered the drug that is in short supply** (i.e., if the drug was covered as a full benefit, the alternate will also be covered as a full benefit).

PharmaCare allows special temporary coverage of an alternate drug only until the drug shortage ends; when the drug is available again, PharmaCare coverage of the alternate returns to its usual state.

### **Brand or Trade name**

the name the product is sold under. Manufacturers may have different trade names for their version of the same drug (e.g., the active chemical ingredient naproxen is sold under several brand names).

### **Brand name drug**

the first formulation (version) of a new drug that is made up of either a new active chemical or a new combination of active chemicals. Brand name drugs are usually patented by their manufacturers so that no one else can manufacture or sell the drug until the patent protection period ends. *Compare to [generic drug](#).*

### **Chemical name**

the scientific name for the active ingredient(s) of a drug. See also [Brand/Trade name](#).

### **Compound, compounded drug**

a drug product that is made to order (compounded) for a particular patient by a pharmacist.

For a compound to be considered for coverage by PharmaCare:

- no commercially manufactured alternate for the PharmaCare-covered shorted drug is available, and

- a health care practitioner has to have prescribed the drug for the patient and obtained approval from PharmaCare's [Special Authority Program](#) before the drug is dispensed, and
- the pharmacy making the compound has to get Special Authority approval for the drug compounding cost before the drug is dispensed.

### **Compounding**

the process by which a pharmacist prepares a made-to-order drug that is based on a practitioner's prescription for a specific patient.

### **Discontinued drug**

a drug that is no longer being made by the manufacturer. If the drug is a generic drug, other manufacturers may still be making their versions of the product and PharmaCare may cover them as alternates. If, however, there is no other version of the drug, there may be no alternative that PharmaCare can cover.

### **Drug Identification Number (DIN)**

a unique number assigned to a commercially manufactured drug by Health Canada. Health Canada assigns a separate number for every strength and dosage form of a drug produced by a manufacturer. For example, manufacturer X produces a 10 mg and 25 mg tablet and a 50 mg capsule of drug Y. Each of these has a separate DIN.

### **Formulation**

the dosage form in which the drug is manufactured (e.g., tablet, liquid, capsule, spray, ointment, etc.)

### **Generic drug**

a drug that contains the same active chemical ingredient or combination of active ingredients as a [brand name drug](#). Each manufacturer can create a version of a generic drug as long as it contains the same active ingredient(s), same route of administration, same dosage form, same strength, same conditions of use and same bioequivalence (that is, the same rate and extent of absorption showing no significant difference) as the brand name drug; only the non-medicinal ingredients such as coatings and fillers can differ.

Generic and brand name drugs have to get approval by Health Canada before they can be sold in Canada.

### **Low Cost Alternative (LCA) category**

a group of drugs that have the same active ingredients and the same strength. A category may contain drugs that have the same or different [formulations](#). For example, one category for Drug X may contain only 50 mg. tablets, while another category for Drug X may contain 100 mg. tablets and capsules.

Under the Low Cost Alternative program, PharmaCare groups drugs into categories and sets a maximum price that it will allow for each category. This maximum price is based on a percentage of the price of the brand name drug. If a manufacturer wants its generic drug

included in the list of LCA drugs that PharmaCare covers, it has to agree to sell the generic to pharmacies at or below the maximum price.

PharmaCare covers the drug up to the maximum price plus a fixed markup for pharmacies (usually 8%). For more information, see our LCA program [patient information sheet](#).

### **Shorted drug**

a drug that is either unavailable or available in such limited supply that pharmacies may not be able to order enough to meet their patients' needs. PharmaCare shortage information includes only drugs that are

- covered by PharmaCare
- reported by community pharmacies in B.C.; the list does not include shorted drugs in hospital or institutional settings

When PharmaCare confirms a shortage of a Pharmacare-covered drug, it publishes information on the PharmaCare coverage options that are available during the shortage.

### **Special Authority (SA) approval (for a compounded alternate to a shorted drug)**

approval from the PharmaCare Special Authority Program for coverage of a [compounded drug](#) after receipt of a request from a prescriber.

During a drug shortage, PharmaCare may temporarily cover a [compounded drug](#) when no other commercially manufactured alternate drug is available.

In almost all cases, coverage of a compounded drug can only be considered if a prescriber submits a request for PharmaCare Special Authority coverage of the compound and the pharmacist submits a Compound Costing Worksheet. For the compound to be covered, both approvals must be in place **before** the pharmacist fills the prescription and submits a claim for the compound.

For a general overview of the Special Authority program, see our [patient information sheet](#).

## DRUG SHORTAGES LISTS — COLUMN DETAILS

## INFORMATION ON THE SHORTED DRUG

Col	Column name	Description	Notes
A	Date reported (yyyy-mm-dd)	Date on which HIBC first confirms the shortage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Date is in yyyy-mm-dd format to allow for sorting by date</li> </ul>
B	Chemical name	The scientific name for the active chemical ingredient(s) of the shorted drug	
C	Strength	The per unit strength of the shorted drug (e.g., 100 mg = 100 mg in each tablet)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• mg = milligram</li> <li>• mcg = microgram</li> <li>• ml = millilitre</li> <li>• mg/ml = milligram per millilitre of liquid</li> </ul> <p>Note: this list is not complete</p>
D	Dosage form	The dosage form of the shorted drug (e.g., tablet, capsule, liquid)	
E	Brand name	Name the product is sold under (also known as the Trade name)	
F	DIN/PIN/NPN	Unique identification number for the shorted drug	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DIN = Drug Identification Number for prescription drugs</li> <li>• PIN = Product Identification Number assigned by PharmaCare; PINs are used for products such as blood glucose test strips or compounded drugs</li> <li>• NPN = Natural Product Number</li> </ul>
G	Manufacturer	Company that sells the drug	
H	Availability Status	Current availability of shorted drug	<p><b>Available on allocation only</b> = the drug is available in limited supply, and the manufacturer fills orders based on a pharmacy's past order history (see <a href="#">allocation</a> above); pharmacies may not be able to order a sufficient supply</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Back-order – no date</b> = the drug is on back-order but there is no estimated delivery date</li> </ul>

Col	Column name	Description	Notes
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Back-order – with date</b> = the drug is on back-order with an <i>estimated</i> delivery date; this date is subject to change</li> <li>• <b>Discontinued – no longer available</b> = the drug is no longer being produced by this manufacturer</li> <li>• <b>Now available</b> = pharmacists can now place orders for the shorted drug. Coverage of the alternate drug will end on the date in Column R, <i>Alternate drug full coverage end date</i>.</li> </ul>
I	Estimated date of availability, if known (yyyy-mm-dd)	Estimated date of availability (if known)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Date is in yyyy-mm-dd format to allow for sorting by date</li> <li>• This column is only completed when the manufacturer has provided an estimated shipping date</li> <li>• <b>Important:</b> the estimated shipping date is subject to change and should not be thought of as a fixed date</li> </ul>

#### INFORMATION ON THE ALTERNATE DRUG

Col	Column name	Description	Notes
J	Last updated on (yyyy-mm-dd)	Date on which HIBC last updated the shortage information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Date is in yyyy-mm-dd format to allow for sorting by date</li> <li>• When a drug is first listed, the date in this column will be the same as the one in Column A</li> <li>• This date is changed whenever HIBC updates information on either the shorted drug or the alternate drug</li> </ul>
K	Alternate drug Trade/Brand name	Trade/brand name of commercially manufactured drug that PharmaCare will temporarily cover during the shortage  OR  If there is no commercially manufactured drug available, information on	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>If an alternate drug is commercially available</b>, information will include the drug's trade/brand name</li> <li>• If there is no commercially available alternate drug, you will see one of the following:           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>No alternative available and no coverage for compounding; discuss treatment options with prescriber</b> = There is no commercial identical</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Col	Column name	Description	Notes
		other options	<p>product that can substitute for the shorted drug; pharmacists will need to talk to the prescribing doctor about other treatment options.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Compounding allowed only with SA approval</b> = PharmaCare may temporarily cover the compound, but the doctor must submit a Special Authority request and the pharmacy must submit a Compound Costing Worksheet. Both must be approved by PharmaCare's Special Authority (SA) Program before the pharmacy can make up the compound and submit a claim for the cost.<sup>1</sup></li> <li>○ <b>Compounding allowed; no SA required</b> = Pharmacies can compound the prescription and PharmaCare will cover the compound if the pharmacist uses the PIN provided in Column N and charges no more than the maximum reimbursement price in Column P (if a price is given).</li> <li>○ <b>Other already-covered full-benefit versions available. Consult the online LCA Data Files for details.</b> = Other manufacturers make the same drug and they have supplies available for ordering. PharmaCare already covers these other versions in the same way as it covers the shorted drug. They are listed in the <a href="#">LCA Data Files</a>.</li> <li>○ Other - see Notes in column S.</li> </ul>
L	Strength	The per unit strength of the commercially manufactured drug that PharmaCare will	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• mg = milligram</li> <li>• mcg = microgram</li> <li>• ml = millilitre</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> In rare instances, Special Authority may waive the requirement for a pharmacist-submitted compounding costing worksheet. Instead, it will set a maximum price that PharmaCare will cover for the compound; see Column P, Max. Reimbursement Price, for details.

Col	Column name	Description	Notes
		temporarily cover during the shortage (e.g., 100 mg = 100 mg in each tablet)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• mg/ml = milligram per millilitre of liquid</li> </ul> <p>Note: this list is not complete</p>
M	Dosage form	The dosage form of the commercially manufactured drug that PharmaCare will temporarily cover during the shortage (e.g., tablet, capsule, liquid)	
N	Alternate drug DIN/ PIN	Drug Identification Number for the alternate commercial product <b>OR</b> Product Identification Number (for compounded products that do not need prior Special Authority approval)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This column is often left blank when prior Special Authority approval for a compound is required</li> </ul>
O	Manufacturer	Company that sells the alternate drug	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This column is left blank when either there is no alternate drug available or when PharmaCare will allow temporary coverage of a compounded drug</li> <li>• In some instances, the shorted drug may be available from other manufacturers whose versions are already covered by PharmaCare. These already-covered alternates are listed in the online <a href="#">LCA Data Files</a>.</li> </ul>
P	Maximum reimbursement price	Maximum price that PharmaCare will reimburse for the alternate drug during the shortage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This column is completed only when HIBC confirms that a commercial supply of the alternate drug is available <b>OR</b> that compounding <b>without</b> prior Special Authority approval of a pharmacist-submitted compounding costing worksheet will be allowed.</li> <li>• <b>Note:</b> If PharmaCare already covers the alternate drug, the maximum drug price is listed in the online <a href="#">LCA Data Files</a>, not here.</li> <li>• When prior SA approval is required, the maximum reimbursement cost is usually included on the approved Compound Costing Worksheet.</li> </ul>

<i>Col</i>	<i>Column name</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Notes</i>
Q	Alternate drug full coverage start date	Date on which PharmaCare will start temporarily covering the alternate drug on the same terms as the shorted drug.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Date is in yyyy-mm-dd format to allow for sorting by date</li> <li>• Completed only when HIBC confirms that a supply of alternate drug is available OR that compounding will be allowed</li> </ul>
R	Alternate drug full coverage end date	Date on which PharmaCare coverage of the alternate drug returns to its usual state.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On this date, full benefit coverage of the alternate drug ends. The alternate drug's coverage reverts to its usual coverage: it may be covered as a partial benefit or a non-benefit (i.e., not covered at all)</li> <li>• Date is in yyyy-mm-dd format to allow for sorting by date</li> <li>• Completed only when HIBC confirms that a supply of the shorted drug is once again available for pharmacies to purchase</li> </ul>

## NOTES

<i>Col</i>	<i>Column name</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Notes</i>
S	Notes		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This column provides additional information on the           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ status of the shortage</li> <li>◦ requirements for obtaining Special Authority approvals</li> <li>◦ other issues</li> </ul>           as appropriate         </li> </ul>

## QUESTIONS?

For general questions, contact [Health Insurance BC](#).

For specific questions about shorted drugs or to report a shortage, pharmacists should contact the HIBC Information Support Team at the PharmaNet HelpDesk.