

SEARCHING FOR PERSONAL HEALTH NUMBERS (PHNs) ON PHARMANET

The correct Personal Health Number (PHN) is vital to a patient's care. It ensures that a patient's complete, up-to-date health information is available to all B.C. health-care providers. Accurate information also helps the Ministry of Health, health authorities, hospitals, and clinics to focus patient services where they are needed most.

If the patient does not have a BC Services Card or is not a resident of B.C.

Ask if they have:

- Lived in B.C. previously (after 1995)
- Had a prescription filled in B.C., or used a publicly funded B.C. health service (including as a non-resident/visitor) (after 1995)

If the answer to either of the above questions is yes, the person probably has a PHN.

- Request identification with the patient's name (correct spelling) and date of birth
- Search for the PHN as described below

Search for the PHN using the PharmaNet Name Search (TPN) and inputting:

- Last name
- Gender
- First name
- Date of birth

If no matches are found

1. Make sure that the patient identification belongs to the patient.
 - Confirm documented first and last names
2. Ask if the patient
 - Has changed their last name or marital status
 - Has a hyphenated last name
 - Has embedded spaces in the last name (e.g., van der Ham)
 - Uses their middle name as a first name
 - Uses a nickname or alternative spelling of their first name that might begin with a different letter (e.g., Bob for Robert)

Try

- Using the patient's first name initial instead of the full name
- Switching first and last name, or middle and last name, especially for patients from cultural backgrounds where the surname traditionally comes first (e.g., Chinese)
- If the patient is from a different cultural background, ask if they go by an English first name
- Using "baby" as the first name if searching for a newborn
- Using closely related names (e.g., Mac vs. Mc)

3. Confirm the date of birth.
 - The system returns results only for the year given. The year must be exact.
4. Contact the physician to get the PHN.
5. Call the PharmaNet Help Desk.

If more than one match is found

- Use the full name and address to select an exact match
- If there is more than one exact match (with name and address) with different PHNs, and you are satisfied they are for the same person, contact the PharmaNet Help Desk to request a merge. They will advise you which PHN to use until the merge is made. Be sure to enter the appropriate PHN in your local system
- If there is no exact match, ask the patient if they have lived at any of the addresses

If information needs to be updated

- Make sure there has been a change of address for this PHN. If so, update the address using TPA (Update Patient Address).
- If you view a document (e.g., birth certificate) that indicates an incorrect date of birth, name, or gender on file for the PHN, advise the patient to inform the BC Medical Services Plan. They should call Health Insurance BC at 604-683-7151 (Lower Mainland) or 1-800-663-7100.

Other notes

- If the patient is a newborn, a PHN may exist, but under a different surname. Ask for any other name the newborn may be registered under.
- If the client is incarcerated (in prison), please do not create a duplicate PHN. Use the PHN that the demographics (name, gender, date of birth) match even if the address is different.
- PharmaNet regularly checks for duplicate PHNs and merges them. If you suspect a duplicate, contact the PharmaNet Help Desk.
- PHNs are assigned only to humans. When filling a prescription for an animal, use the pet owner's PHN. To prevent errors in the pet owner's medication history, use the **veterinarian's** licence number as the Practitioner ID, and the reference code V9.
- PHNs created by pharmacies do not entitle a patient to Medical Services Plan or PharmaCare coverage; claims submitted with pharmacy-assigned PHNs adjudicate to \$0.00.

If you need help, contact the PharmaNet Help Desk

For more about PHNs, please see Section 3.3. in the PharmaCare Policy Manual www.gov.bc.ca/pharmacarepolicy