



# BC PharmaCare Coverage Limits for Blood Glucose Test Strips

BC PharmaCare limits the number of blood glucose test strips it covers for a patient each calendar year. The amount is based on the diabetes treatment patients are receiving. This policy is based on research showing that most people with type 2 diabetes who are not using insulin do not need to test their blood sugar routinely as there is little evidence that frequent self-monitoring of blood glucose without a medically valid reason improves diabetes care.

**Most people can test as much as they need to within the amount of strips covered.** If you need more than the annual amount, see page 2.

**How is my annual limit determined?** Your annual limit depends on the diabetes treatment you are receiving.

Treatment for Managing Diabetes	Notes	Annual Limit
<b>Insulin <u>without</u> continuous glucose monitor (CGM)</b>	This amount applies whether or not you are taking other diabetes medications, as well as insulin.	<b>3,000</b>
<b>Insulin <u>with</u> CGM</b>	If you use a CGM, you may also need blood glucose test strips; for example, if your CGM shows an error code, or if your symptoms don't match your CGM readings.	<b>200</b>
<b>Anti-hyperglycemic medications with a <u>higher risk</u> of causing hypoglycemia (that is, low blood sugar)</b>	Drugs with a higher risk of hypoglycemia include insulin secretagogues (e.g. sulfonylureas such as glyburide and meglitinides such as repaglinide).	<b>400</b>
<b>Anti-hyperglycemic medications with a <u>lower risk</u> of causing hypoglycemia (that is, low blood sugar)</b>	Drugs with a lower risk of hypoglycemia include alpha-glucosidase inhibitors such as acarbose, biguanides such as metformin, dipeptidyl peptidase-4 (DPP-4) inhibitors such as linagliptin, incretin mimetics/glucagon-like peptide (GLP-1) agonists such as semaglutide, sodium-glucose cotransporter 2 (SGLT2) inhibitors such as empagliflozin, and thiazolidinediones (TZDs) such as pioglitazone.	<b>200</b>
<b>Managing diabetes through diet/lifestyle</b>		<b>200</b>

**Important:** If you belong to more than one category, and are not using a CGM, the higher limit applies.

**How will PharmaCare know which category I am in?** Each time you pick up a prescription, your pharmacy records it in PharmaNet. PharmaNet is a computer network where all prescriptions filled in B.C. are recorded. PharmaNet determines the proper test strip limit. If your treatment changes, PharmaNet automatically updates your annual limit of test strips.

**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 annual limit in PharmaNet. Your pharmacist can advise you if you have exceeded your limit. You can also contact us at the number below to find out how many strips you have left for the year.

**Do I need to pay attention to expiry dates?** Yes. Make sure you don't buy strips that will expire before you can use them.

**How often should I 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:

- PharmaCare website at [www.gov.bc.ca/pharmacare/bloodglucoseteststrips](http://www.gov.bc.ca/pharmacare/bloodglucoseteststrips)
- Diabetes Canada website at [www.diabetes.ca](http://www.diabetes.ca)
- Diabetes Canada 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 prescriber—or a health professional at a diabetes education centre or authorized primary care network—can send a request to PharmaCare for coverage of additional strips, if you are **not using insulin or you are using a CGM** 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.

Children under a Nursing Support Service using a CGM may qualify for additional strips. Your physician can submit the request to PharmaCare for additional strips at the same time that coverage for the CGM is requested.

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?** 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 a.m. to 8 p.m. (except statutory holidays) and Saturday 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. (except statutory holidays).