Hello and welcome to *our first* PharmaCare Community Newsletter

Covering your community

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We've created this newsletter to help community workers stay informed about BC PharmaCare. It will share updates on what medications, medical devices, supplies, and pharmacy services are covered.

Whether you work with youth, seniors, newcomers, low-income families, or people dealing with substance use disorders, you'll find information and resources to help clients understand PharmaCare coverage and how to access it.
In each edition, you'll find out who can get BC PharmaCare coverage, and how. We'll include resources like posters, FAQs, and reminders to make sure you have the latest information to support your work.

We'd like to support your practice through working with you. If you have ideas on how to make this information easy to use in your community or organization, please let us know. Send suggestions, comments or questions to the communications team at PharmaCareInfo@gov.bc.ca. We look forward to hearing from you!

Stay tuned for our upcoming editions. The newsletter will be sent quarterly to subscribers of the Community Hub webpage, and available online at:
www.gov.bc.ca/PharmaCareCommunityHub
Kind regards,

BC PharmaCare community newsletter team

PharmaCare Coverage Compass now live!

PharmaCare has 13 plans that help B.C. residents pay for prescription medications, medical devices and supplies, and pharmacy services. One person can be covered by several plans. For most plans, a person must be enrolled in the Medical Services Plan of B.C. (MSP).

If you are not sure which PharmaCare plans your clients qualify for, try using the PharmaCare Compass—a quick, simple online resource that guides you through coverage options. It shows which plans people are automatically enrolled in, and which require enrolment, or an application.

Community groups can guide clients through 10 simple questions to help them check which benefits they may qualify for and make sure they aren't paying more than they need to for prescriptions.

The PharmaCare Compass is also available as a printable flowchart that asks questions that will help determine eligibility for coverage, and, if applicable, the steps to enrol.

Access the print version of the Compass (PDF, 237 KB).

Find the PharmaCare coverage compass at:
www.gov.bc.ca/pharmacarecompass

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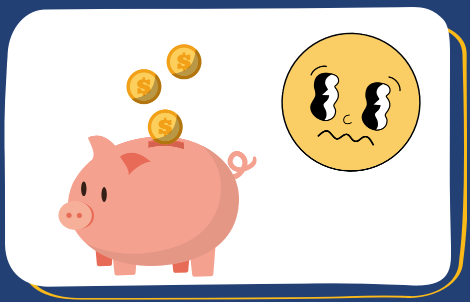
6 tips to get the most out of your PharmaCare Coverage

Register for Fair PharmaCare. Your coverage depends on your household income — the lower your income, the more help you get. You only need to register once. Keep filing tax returns for coverage that is based on your income.



Registered for Fair PharmaCare but still need help with medication costs? You might qualify for an income review or the option to spread your deductible payment over the year! Check out Get Help Paying Your Deductible at www.gov.bc.ca/deductiblehelp.

Some drugs have the same active ingredients, but cost less. Ask a pharmacist if they can switch to a version that is fully covered by PharmaCare.

Visit BC PharmaCare's website and check out what's covered — you might be surprised. Did you know PharmaCare fully covers most contraceptives, as well as nicotine patches, gum, and lozenges to help B.C. residents quit smoking?

Some medications are only covered in specific medical situations. If you meet the criteria, a prescriber can send a Special Authority request form to PharmaCare. Learn more about Special Authority on page 7.

Can't get in to see a doctor? Pharmacists in B.C. can assess and prescribe for 21 minor health issues — like acne or urinary tract infections — at no cost to you.

Understanding B.C. PharmaCare

BC PharmaCare helps B.C. residents pay for many prescription medications, some medical supplies and devices, and pharmacy services. Since launching in 1974, PharmaCare has evolved from a single plan for seniors to 13 plans for people of all ages, incomes, and health needs.

Each PharmaCare plan covers specific medications, supplies, or services for a defined group of people. One person can be covered under several plans.
When you fill a prescription at a pharmacy, the amount PharmaCare covers is calculated on the spot. You do not need to submit receipts, but you do need your Personal Health Number (PHN), found on your BC Services Card.

Universal, but registration makes coverage based on income.

All B.C. residents enrolled in MSP automatically have Fair PharmaCare plan coverage, with a $10,000 annual deductible. To receive coverage that matches their family income, they must register and consent to PharmaCare checking their income with the CRA. Then their coverage is based on income through a higher or lower deductible.

Deductible: The amount a person pays on their own each year on eligible costs before PharmaCare contributes to eligible costs

Family maximum: The most a person pays in a year on eligible costs on their own before PharmaCare pays 100% of eligible costs
Register at gov.bc.ca/ahdc

Universal, requires no action for 100% coverage

Everyone who is enrolled in MSP is automatically covered by some PharmaCare plans:

- Plan NP: National Pharmacare – 100% coverage of eligible contraceptives, diabetes medications and supplies, and menopausal hormone therapies
- Plan Z: Assurance – 100% coverage of medications for opioid use disorder, medical abortion, and medical assistance in dying (MAiD)
- Plan M: Medication Management – pays for some pharmacy services, such as vaccinations and minor ailment assessments

Under Plan NP and Plan Z, people present their BC Services Card and prescription at a pharmacy for a covered medication, and they pay nothing.

Eligibility linked to other programs or organizations

Some B.C. residents are automatically covered under these plans:

- Plan B: Long-term Care – 100% coverage for people living in long-term care facilities that offer Plan B
- Plan C: Income Assistance and Family Services – 100% coverage for people:
- receiving assistance through the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction (SDPR)
  - in the care of the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD), including by agreement
  - in the care of an Indigenous Governing Body (IGB)
  - arriving in Canada (B.C.) through the Canada-Ukraine authorization for emergency travel (CUAET)
- Plan F: Children in the At Home Program – 100% coverage for children with complex disabilities enrolled in the MCFD At Home Program
- Plan W: First Nations Health Benefits – 100% coverage for people enrolled with the First Nations Health Authority

Specific to a health condition (or disease)

Some plans support people with particular medication or treatment needs, such as:

- Plan D: Cystic Fibrosis – automatic with enrolment in a cystic fibrosis clinic. Provides 100% coverage of eligible digestive enzymes through Plan D and other approved CF-related products through their primary PharmaCare plan
- Plan G: Psychiatric Medications –a health provider can register a client when income is a barrier to getting critical mental health medications. Provides 100% coverage of eligible psychiatric medications
- Plan P: Palliative Care – health provider registers people who consent to this coverage at end-of-life. Provides 100% coverage of eligible medications
- Plan X: British Columbia Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS - automatic with enrolment in the HIV/AIDS Drug Treatment Program provided through the Centre for Excellence
- Plan S: Smoking Cessation Program available to all B.C. residents enrolled in MSP who wish to quit smoking. Clients sign up at the pharmacy for 100% coverage of nicotine replacement therapies (patch, gum, lozenges) or coverage of smoking cessation prescription medication through their primary drug plan

Best first steps

Register for Fair PharmaCare
For most residents of B.C., the first and most important step for medication coverage is to register for the Fair PharmaCare Plan. Coverage is based on family income. Lower income means more help in the form of a lower or no deductible.

Everyone is encouraged to register.

Coverage is for life; however, you do need to file your income taxes every year to get income-based coverage. This is the only plan that people register for on their own.

ℹ️ Many third party and insurance drug plans require people to be registered for Fair PharmaCare before they will pay their share of prescription costs.

Check out the PharmaCare Coverage Compass
The PharmaCare Coverage Compass helps you navigate PharmaCare's many plans and coverage pathways. The Compass is a simple, interactive tool.
·Identify which plans may apply to you
- Understand next steps
- Find detailed information quickly

Everyone is encouraged to:
- Ask their health care provider to prescribe medications that PharmaCare covers
- Ask pharmacists to adapt prescriptions to medications that PharmaCare covers
- Compare pharmacy services and prices. Pharmacies charge different amounts for medications and services

More help

Call the PharmaCare Help Desk at 1-800-663-7100 (anywhere in BC).

Staff at the PharmaCare Help Desk can answer questions about BC PharmaCare coverage in over 140 languages.

Telephone for the deaf: Dial 711
Video Relay Services (VRS) sign language interpretation is free for people who are deaf, hard of hearing or speech-impaired

In 2024-25 PharmaCare covered:

49 million claims

6300 medications

BC PharmaCare e-learning module for staff working with seniors in long-term care and other facilities

BC PharmaCare has launched an e-learning module for nurses and staff working with seniors in long-term care and other facilities.

This short online resource offers practical guidance on how to support residents in getting the most from their BC PharmaCare drug coverage.

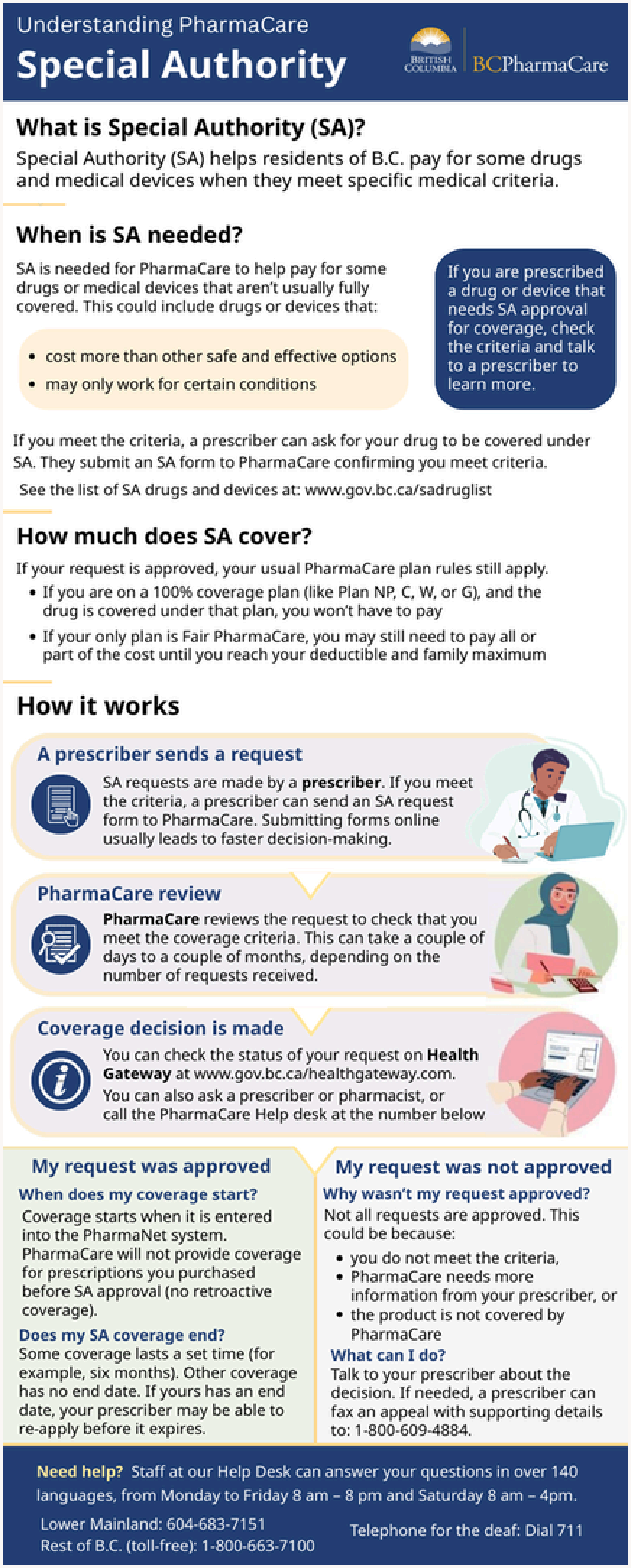
The module provides a plain language explanation of coverage plans, tips for navigating Special Authority and other PharmaCare programs, and ways to reduce medication costs for residents and families.

The module is self-paced, interactive, and designed to fit into busy schedules.

📌 **How to Use It:**

- Share the link with staff and colleagues
- Post on social media, in newsletters and on your website
- Consider including the module in staff training or lunch workshops
- Share the module with caregivers and facility family counsel members
- Print and share the downloadable job aids

Access the training at:
hhslibrary.libguides.com/ltc-pharmacare



Special Authority infographic

Some drugs require a special request from a healthcare provider to be partially or fully covered by BC PharamCare.
This is because these drugs may work for certain patients only, or they're more expensive than drugs that are equally safe and effective.

This infographic explains the basics PharmaCare's Special Authority program.

📌 How to Use It:

- Share with clients staff and colleagues
- Post it on social media, in newsletters and emails
- Print and post in a public facing area

Resources:

To learn more visit:
Drugs that require Special Authority
View the Special Authority drug list.

Download the infographic (PDF)

Download the poster (PDF)

BCCDC counterfeit pills infographic

Did you know?

The BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC) has created an infographic, Fake Pills Are Increasing in BC (PDF, 192KB), to raise awareness about counterfeit pills. We encourage community workers to share this resource with clients when appropriate. Counterfeit pills circulating in B.C. have been found to contain strong opioids and other harmful substances that can cause drug poisoning. These pills can look exactly like prescribed medications.

Fake pills sold on the streets and online commonly appear as oxycodone, alprazolam (Xanax), hydromorphone (Dilaudid), Percocet, or amphetamine (Adderall).

If appropriate for their clients, community organizations can help by:

- Sharing or displaying the infographic in spaces clients use
- Talking with clients about naloxone, and offering naloxone kits and training
- Referring clients to their clinicians or to helpstartshere.gov.bc.ca to learn about recovery supports
- Providing harm reduction information, including safer substance use education
- Advising people that the safest option is to avoid taking pills that are not prescribed to them

Fake Pills are Increasing in BC

towardtheheart.com

Counterfeit pills are **fake pills** that are made to look like prescription medications.

In 2024, **1 in 4 pills*** checked in BC had unexpected ingredients including fentanyl and benzodiazepines, which can increase the risk of drug poisoning/overdose.

Fake pills sold on the streets and online commonly appear as oxycodone, alprazolam (Xanax), hydromorphone (Dilaudid), Percocet, or amphetamine (Adderall).

It can be impossible to tell if a pill is fake

Any pill could be fake if you didn't get it from a pharmacy yourself.

Fake pills can look exactly like real medications.

Fake pills are sometimes found in re-used packaging from real medications.

Even the person selling or giving you the pills may not know they are fake.

Fake pills increase the risk of overdose

You **never really know** what or how much of a drug is in a fake pill.

Even if you have used opioid pills before, you are still at risk of drug poisoning (overdose).

It's safest to only use pills prescribed to you

For help reducing or stopping your use, find resources at helpstartshere.gov.bc.ca.

If you are going to use pills, **use harm reduction** to reduce the risk from fake pills.

Test your drugs | Check drug alerts | Have Naloxone and know how to use it | Use with someone you trust | Don't use at the same time so you can help each other | Start low, go slow

For more information visit: www.towardtheheart.com
Last Update: May, 2025

People who are at risk of consuming counterfeit pills are encouraged to:

- Use drug-checking services
- Carry a naloxone kit
- Only use with someone who has naloxone and is trained to administer it
- Access local or Virtual overdose prevention services, such as National Overdose Response Service (NORS) or the Lifeguard App
- Sign up for toxic drug alerts by texting JOIN to 253787 ("ALERTS")

Resources:

- Fake Pills Are Increasing in BC (PDF, 192KB)
- Overdose prevention
- National Overdose Response Service (NORS)
- Lifeguard App
- helpstartshere.gov.bc.ca