

BC PHARMACARE NEWSLETTER

Edition 26-002: February 2026

Table of Contents

National Pharmacare Plan launches March 1.....	2
Updates to Plan W policy and OTC recommendation form	4
PharmaCare Trends 2024/25.....	5
New cultural safety learning opportunities at UBC CPPD	5
Reminder: Pharmacist interviews about nicotine cessation support in B.C.	6
Reminder: Correct quantities of ostomy supplies.....	7
Policy spotlight: Ostomy supplies	7
New poster: Your PharmaNet records. Your privacy.....	8
QuitNow program launches new referral portal.....	8
Formulary and listing updates.....	9
Your Voice: Input needed for drug decisions	9

The PharmaCare Newsletter team works from the territory of the lək̓ʷəŋən People, known today as the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations. Our gratitude extends to them and all Indigenous Peoples on whose territories and lands we live and work.

BC PharmaCare counts on pharmacies and device providers to practice cultural safety and humility. To learn more, read *Coming Together for Wellness*, a series of articles by the First Nations Health Authority (FNHA) and PharmaCare, and consider taking the *Sən'yas* Indigenous Cultural Safety course.

The PharmaCare Newsletter is published by the Health System Policy & Oversight Division to provide information to B.C.'s healthcare providers.

gov.bc.ca/pharmacies
gov.bc.ca/programs
gov.bc.ca/deviceproviders



Q: What is the role of venlafaxine (Effexor XR, generics) in the management of menopause-associated hot flashes?

A: The answer is in the current edition of [PAD Refills](#). Make sure to [subscribe](#) so you don't miss out on news and updates!



National Pharmacare Plan launches March 1

The provincial universal National Pharmacare Plan (Plan NP) was created under the [Drug Plans Regulation](#) on January 29, 2026. In addition, the pricing of insulin as a PharmaCare benefit will be regulated under the [Drug Price Regulation](#) and subject to the [Maximum Pricing Policy](#), and the [Full Payment Policy](#) through an amendment to the [Provider Regulation](#).

The pricing of insulin as a PharmaCare benefit will be regulated under the Drug Price Regulation and subject to the [Maximum Pricing Policy](#), and subject to the [Full Payment Policy](#) through an amendment to the [Provider Regulation](#). Insulin was previously unregulated and covered at retail price. This change will go into effect March 1, 2026.

Starting March 1, Plan NP will provide 100% coverage of select diabetes medications, menopausal hormone therapy (MHT), and contraceptives. The federal government contributes funding for national pharmacare.

All B.C. residents enrolled in MSP will be eligible for Plan NP coverage. Plan NP coverage is provided at the pharmacy and processed in PharmaNet, as with all BC PharmaCare plans. Exceptional coverage will be available for clients in the MSP coverage wait period.

Expanded coverage for certain diabetes-related devices and supplies will begin on April 1, 2026. More details to come in the March 2026 PharmaCare Newsletter.

Plan NP benefit lists

Health providers can review the Plan NP benefit lists now on these new web pages:

- [National Pharmacare \(Plan NP\)](#)
 - [Plan NP menopausal hormone therapy \(MHT\)](#)
 - [Plan NP diabetes medications](#)

The contraceptives now covered under Plan Z will be covered under Plan NP.

Some benefits are subject to [Low Cost Alternative \(LCA\)](#) pricing. The public is being encouraged to ask their pharmacist or prescriber to adapt to or prescribe fully covered benefits.

PharmaCare's [Full Payment Policy](#) applies to Plan NP benefits with 100% coverage, including insulins. This means pharmacies cannot charge a client for the medication or any service associated with the dispense. Insulin was previously unregulated and covered at retail price. This change will go into effect March 1, 2026.



Need information on MHT? Contact the BC Provincial Academic Detailing (PAD) service to schedule a session on [Medications for menopause-associated vasomotor and genitourinary symptoms](#).

You can also read the PAD Refills Newsletter topic for January 2026, [What is the role of Duavive in the management of menopause symptoms?](#)

Special Authority coverage

Several Plan NP diabetes benefits will continue to require [Special Authority \(SA\)](#). Once SA is approved, the benefits have 100% coverage and the Full Payment Policy applies (LCA pricing may apply for some products).

No MHTs or contraceptives will require SA.

Pharmacists cannot apply for SA for Plan NP benefits; however, they can draft an SA request for a prescriber to review, sign and submit.

On **March 6, 2025**, the Province of B.C. was the second province (after Manitoba) to sign an agreement with the Government of Canada for the implementation of national pharmacare. Agreements were signed shortly after with Prince Edward Island and Yukon.

Resources

- [Drug Plans Regulation](#)
- [Provider Regulation](#)
- [Drug Price Regulation](#)
- [PharmaCare Policy Manual, Section 5.10: Full Payment Policy](#)
- [PharmaCare Policy Manual, Section 5.6: Maximum Pricing Policy](#)
- [Low Cost Alternative \(LCA\) program](#)
- [Special Authority \(SA\)](#)
- BC Provincial Academic Detailing (PAD) service [Medications for menopause-associated vasomotor and genitourinary symptoms](#)
- [National Pharmacare \(Plan NP\)](#)
 - [Plan NP menopausal hormone therapy \(MHT\)](#)
 - [Diabetes medications](#)
- [National pharmacare in B.C. webpage for the public](#)
- Health Canada pages
 - [Government of Canada signs pharmacare agreement with British Columbia](#)
 - [British Columbia's pharmacare agreement](#)

Updates to Plan W policy and OTC recommendation form

In response to feedback from clients and health care providers, PharmaCare has updated the [PharmaCare Policy Manual, Section 7.12: First Nations Health Benefits \(Plan W\)](#) and the [Plan W OTC Recommendation form \(PDF, 548KB\)](#) to help dispensing and non-dispensing pharmacies more easily recommend OTC items to Plan W clients.

The updates mean that:

- A Plan W OTC benefit can be recommended by a pharmacist and dispensed at a different pharmacy, under the recommending pharmacist's licence, similar to [Minor Ailments and Contraception Service \(MACS\)](#) prescriptions
- A Plan W OTC recommendation can be documented on any form, as long as it includes the information required on the OTC recommendation form
- The client's signature is no longer required, and pharmacists can authorize refills

Free, 1-hour online course

The Ministry of Health, First Nations Health Authority (FNHA), University of British Columbia (UBC) and community pharmacy colleagues have collaborated to develop a provider-facing educational course regarding these changes. The course, [Plan W OTC Recommendations: 2025 Updates](#), is now live and can be accessed at no cost.

The course highlights how these changes are meant to support culturally safe provision of services for FNHA clients and provides examples of how pharmacists can implement these changes in their daily practice. The course counts as one hour towards the minimum three hours of learning related to Indigenous Cultural Safety, Cultural Humility, and Anti Racism required annually by the BC College of Pharmacists.

Resources

- [Plan W OTC Recommendations: 2025 Updates](#)
- [PharmaCare Policy Manual, Section 7.12: First Nations Health Benefits \(Plan W\)](#)
- [Minor Ailments and Contraceptives Service \(MACS\)](#)
- [Plan W OTC Recommendation form \(PDF, 548KB\)](#)

PharmaCare Trends 2024/25



The latest edition of [PharmaCare Trends 2024/25 \(PDF, 781KB\)](#) is now available. The report highlights progress in delivering an effective, balanced and responsive PharmaCare program, with sections detailing expenditures by PharmaCare plan, the top ten drugs covered, formulary expansion, and more.

This document is published annually by the BC Ministry of Health. It provides information about the PharmaCare program for health researchers, government staff and the public.

Data in this publication is from the fiscal year 2024-2025 and reports on claims for drugs and medical devices and supplies for which PharmaCare contributed at least a portion of the cost.

Read previous editions of PharmaCare Trends on the [PharmaCare publications](#) web page.

Resources

- [PharmaCare Trends 2024/25 \(PDF, 781KB\)](#)
- [PharmaCare publications](#)

New cultural safety learning opportunities at UBC CPPD

Registration is now open for three new Indigenous cultural safety learning opportunities at UBC Continuing Professional Development and Practice (CPPD). All courses and webinars are **free** and designed to support culturally safe pharmacy practice.

Indigenous Health Benefits (Online course – 1 credit)

This asynchronous online course provides an overview of Indigenous health benefits, including how pharmacists can support client access, navigate benefit structures, and promote culturally safe interactions with clients. Register at [Uprooting Pharmacy – Indigenous Health Benefits](#). The course is available until January 14, 2027.

Barriers and Facilitators to Culturally Safe Practice (Webinar – 1 credit)

Join the online webinar designed to strengthen culturally safe pharmacy practice on February 12, 2026, from 12–1pm. This session explores how Western and Indigenous worldviews shape care in a pharmacy context. Register at [Uprooting Pharmacy - Barriers and Facilitators to Culturally Safe Practice Webinar - Cultural Safety and Humility](#).

Bringing Together Traditional and Western Medicines (Webinar – 1 credit)

Expand your understanding of team-based practice in this webinar on February 26, 2026, from 12–1pm. This session reviews the history of extractive science and biopiracy and how these legacies influence pharmacy practice today. Register at [Uprooting Pharmacy - Bringing Together Traditional and Western Medicines Webinar - Cultural Safety and Humility](#).

Visit [Indigenous Cultural Safety, Humility, and Anti-Racism | Pharmsci](#) to learn more.

Resources

- [Indigenous Cultural Safety, Humility, and Anti-Racism | Pharmsci](#)
- [Uprooting Pharmacy – Indigenous Health Benefits](#)
- [Uprooting Pharmacy - Barriers and Facilitators to Culturally Safe Practice Webinar - Cultural Safety and Humility](#)
- [Uprooting Pharmacy - Bringing Together Traditional and Western Medicines Webinar - Cultural Safety and Humility](#)

Reminder: Pharmacist interviews about nicotine cessation support in B.C.

A Ministry-funded research study by the University of British Columbia continues to seek input from community pharmacists providing non-pharmacologic nicotine cessation support to patients in B.C.

Community pharmacists who complete a 30-minute one-on-one interview with the research team will receive a \$50 honorarium for their participation. To take part in the study, contact Dr. Karen Dahri at karen.dahri@vch.ca. The goal of the interviews is to determine how community pharmacists in B.C. deliver non-pharmacologic nicotine cessation support to individuals who smoke and/or vape and related barriers and facilitators to providing this service.

B.C. community pharmacists can assess clients for nicotine dependence as part of the [Minor Ailments and Contraception Services \(MACS\)](#). They are encouraged to sign clients up for the [BC Smoking Cessation Program](#), which covers the full cost of [nicotine replacement therapy \(NRT\) products](#) and some or all the cost of [prescribed smoking cessation medications](#).

Pharmacists assessing clients for nicotine dependence are encouraged to enrol in the UBC Continuing Professional Development and Practice (CPPD) course [MACS: Tobacco Use Disorder](#).

Resources

- [Smoking cessation](#) – BC PharmaCare
- [Minor Ailments and Contraception Services \(MACS\)](#) – BC PharmaCare
- [Ministry of Health Research Seed Grant Program](#) – UBC
- [MACS: Tobacco Use Disorder](#) – UBC CPPD

Reminder: Correct quantities of ostomy supplies

When submitting a claim for ostomy products, pharmacies and device suppliers should enter the number of ostomy products in units (not boxes) as the dispensed quantity.

For example, enter a quantity of 10 in PharmaNet when dispensing a box that contains 10 ostomy pouches. Using the correct unit of measurement will ensure accurate payment and patient records.

For more information, refer to [Correct quantities for PharmaCare claims](#) and the [PharmaCare Policy Manual, Section 5.5: Correct Quantities Policy](#).

Resources

- [Correct quantities for PharmaCare claims](#)
- [PharmaCare Policy Manual, Section 5.5: Correct Quantities Policy](#)
- [Ostomy supplies PINs](#)



Policy spotlight: Ostomy supplies

POLICY SPOTLIGHT: OSTOMY SUPPLIES



PharmaCare covers eligible ostomy supplies for patients who have undergone surgery on the bowel and/or bladder that results in a colostomy, ileostomy or urostomy, requiring the application of an external pouch.

Coverage is subject to the rules of the patient's primary PharmaCare plan, including any annual deductible requirements.

PharmaCare covers eligible ostomy supplies up to the regular retail price with no dispensing fee.

 Learn more about the ostomy supplies in the PharmaCare Policy Manual, Section 5.21: Ostomy Supplies 

How to enter claims in PharmaNet

Claims must be entered in PharmaNet using the Product Identification Number (PIN) indicated in the list of eligible ostomy supplies.

When submitting a claim for ostomy products, pharmacies and device suppliers should enter the number of ostomy products in units (not boxes) as the dispensed quantity.

Ex: Enter a quantity of 8 in PharmaNet when dispensing a box that contains 8 ostomy pouches.

Policy Spotlight: Ostomy Supplies 

Resources

- [PharmaCare Policy Manual, Section 5.21: Ostomy Supplies](#)
- [Ostomy PINs](#)

New poster: Your PharmaNet records. Your privacy.

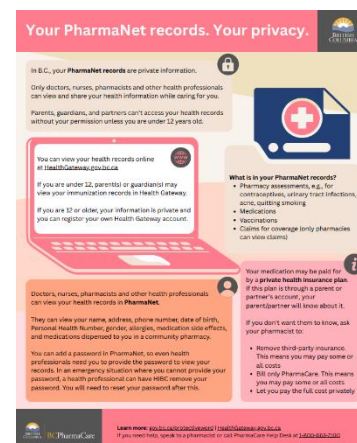
The PharmaCare communications team has created a new poster for pharmacy clients about PharmaNet records.

The poster includes information about who can view a client's PharmaNet records, what information is in their PharmaNet records, adding a password to their PharmaNet records, and accessing their records through [Health Gateway](#).

Visit [Your PharmaNet records \(PDF, 115KB\)](#) to view and download the poster.

Resources

- [Your PharmaNet records \(PDF, 115KB\)](#)



QuitNow program launches new referral portal

[QuitNow](#) has launched the new [QuitNow Referral Portal](#) to help healthcare providers, including pharmacists, refer clients for support with quitting or reducing smoking, vaping, and other forms of nicotine use. The new portal makes the referral process easier, faster and more secure, and strengthens continuity of care.

The [QuitNow Referral Portal](#) offers referring providers:

- A streamlined digital referral form—no faxing
- Enhanced security and privacy protections
- Tracking of referral status
- Client updates, such as if they've connected with QuitNow coaching services
- Access to research and training resources

It takes less than 10 minutes to [create a provider account](#) and start sending referrals. If you don't find your pharmacy in the dropdown list, select "Other". It takes less than two minutes to submit a referral for a client once your account is set up. Learn how by watching QuitNow's [two-minute instructional video](#).

QuitNow is a program for B.C. residents wanting to quit or reduce tobacco and nicotine use, delivered by the BC Lung Foundation on behalf of the B.C. government. The program offers free and confidential services to B.C. residents aged 10 and older.

The [QuitNow Health Care Providers](#) web page has resources, training opportunities and webinars to support providers with nicotine cessation counselling and treatment planning.

Pharmacists are always encouraged to sign people up for the [BC Smoking Cessation Program](#), which covers the full cost of [nicotine replacement therapy \(NRT\) products](#) and some or all the cost of [prescribed](#)

[smoking cessation medications](#). Learn more at [Smoking Cessation Program – information for health professionals](#).

Pharmacists assessing clients for nicotine dependence as part of a Minor Ailments and Contraception Service (MACS) are encouraged to enrol in the UBC Continuing Professional Development and Practice (CPPD) course [MACS: Tobacco Use Disorder](#).

Resources

- [QuitNow Referral Portal](#)
- [QuitNow Referral Portal: Create an account](#)
- [QuitNow instructional video: How to create a provider account](#)
- [QuitNow: Health Care Providers page](#)
- [Smoking Cessation Program – information for health professionals](#)

Formulary and listing updates

Limited Coverage benefit: captopril (Noyada)

PharmaCare has added the following limited coverage item to the PharmaCare drug list. Special Authority approval is required for coverage.

Drug name	captopril (Noyada)		
Date	January 28, 2026		
Indication	The treatment of essential or renovascular hypertension, diabetic nephropathy, or congestive heart failure		
DINs	02543907 02543915	Strength & form	5 mg/5 mL oral solution 25 mg/5 mL oral solution

Regular benefit: ethambutol (Etibi)

PharmaCare has decided to cover the following drug as a regular benefit.

Drug name	ethambutol (Etibi)		
Date	February 4, 2026		
Indication	Treatment of all forms of tuberculosis, including tuberculous meningitis, caused by Mycobacterium tuberculosis		
DIN	00247960	Strength & form	100 mg tablet

Your Voice: Input needed for drug decisions

The knowledge and experience of patients, caregivers and patient groups is integral to [B.C.'s drug review process](#). If you know someone who is taking one of the drugs below or who has a condition any of the drugs treat, please encourage them to visit www.gov.bc.ca/BCyourvoice.

Your Voice is now accepting input on the following drugs:

Drug	Indication	Input window
sarilumab (Kevzara®)	Polymyalgia rheumatica (PMR) in adults	January 28 to February 24 at 11:59 pm
pegcetacoplan (Empaveli™)	C3 glomerulopathy (C3G) or primary immune-complex membranoproliferative glomerulonephritis (IC-MPGN) in adults and adolescents aged 12 years and older	January 28 to February 24 at 11:59 pm
caplacizumab (Cabliivi®)	Acquired thrombotic thrombocytopenic purpura (aTTP) in adults	January 28 to February 24 at 11:59 pm
vosoritide (TBC)	Achondroplasia in pediatric patients whose epiphyses are not closed	January 28 to February 24 at 11:59 pm

Did you know?



For the fiscal year 2024-2025, PharmaCare covered 191 new generic drugs.

Read [PharmaCare Trends 2024-25 \(PDF, 781KB\)](#) for more PharmaCare facts.