

BC PharmaCare

Minor Ailments and Contraception Service (MACS)

self-assessment guide



For severe symptoms or if this is a medical emergency, seek immediate medical attention or call 9-1-1.

B.C. pharmacists can assess and prescribe for minor ailments and contraception. This service is free to every B.C. resident with a Personal Health Number. Your Personal Health Number can be found on your driver's licence, BC Services Card or CareCard.

If your symptoms match the symptoms of one of the ailments below, you may choose to meet with a pharmacist for a clinical assessment. Following the assessment, the pharmacist will advise you on the best course of action. This may include recommending an over-the-counter or prescription treatment.

Ailments

A pharmacist can assess you and prescribe or recommend treatment for these conditions:

- Acne (mild)
- Allergies and hay fever
- Canker sores (oral ulcers)
- Cold sores
- Fungal infections
- Headaches
- Heartburn (acid reflex/GERD)
- Hemorrhoids
- Hives and itching, including from bug bites (urticaria)
- Impetigo
- Menstrual pain
- Nicotine dependence
- Pink eye (conjunctivitis)
- Pinworms or threadworms
- Shingles
- Skin rash (dermatitis)
- Sprains and strains (musculoskeletal pain)
- Thrush (oral fungal infection)
- Upset stomach (indigestion)
- Urinary tract infection (uncomplicated)
- Yeast infection (vaginal candidiasis)

Acne (mild)

- Whiteheads and/or blackheads, or
- Small red bumps and pimples filled with pus

Read more about [acne](#) at HealthLink BC.

Allergies and hay fever

One or more of the following, unrelated to an infection such as cold or flu:

- Stuffy or runny nose (usually clear and watery)
- Sneezing
- Itchy nose, eyes, and/or throat

Read more about [allergies \(allergic rhinitis\)](#) at HealthLink BC.

Canker sores (oral ulcers)

- Small, shallow, painful, recurrent lesions on lining inside the mouth, cheek, or on the tongue
- Lesions usually have red border with white or yellow centre

Read more about [canker sores](#) at HealthLink BC.

Cold sores

- Begins with itching, tingling, or burning sensation at border of lip. A cluster of fluid-filled, painful blisters soon appear (usually within 24 hours), surrounded by redness. Blisters then break, crust over, and usually heal within 7-10 days.

Read more about [cold sores](#) at HealthLink BC.

Fungal infections

- **Jock itch:** Large, round, red patches with bumpy or scaly, well-defined borders, usually on upper inner thigh or groin. May spread to inner leg toward buttocks or toward stomach/abdomen. Commonly itchy, burning
- **Athlete's foot:** Commonly occurs between toes but may occur on other areas of the feet. May be itchy, cracked or scaly, inflamed or blistered skin that burns and/or hurts
- **Ringworm:** Small, round, red patch with well-defined bumpy or scaly border that usually occurs on neck, trunk or limbs. May feel itchy or burning
- **Nail infection:** May occur in fingernails or toenails. Commonly, thickened, brittle nails starting at tip of nail and spreading to the whole nail with yellow/white or orange/brown-coloured vertical streaks. May have pain or discomfort

Read more about these conditions at HealthLink BC:

- [Jock itch](#)
- [Athlete's foot](#)
- [Ringworm](#)
- [Fungal nail infections](#)

Headaches

- Symptoms may include pain, tightness and pressure on both sides of head and across forehead of mild to moderate intensity with no nausea or vomiting.

Read more about [headaches](#) at HealthLink BC.

Heartburn (acid reflux/GERD)

- Burping, stomach acid rising from stomach into mouth
- Burning feeling in the stomach or lower chest rising to the neck

Read more about [heartburn \(Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease\)](#) at HealthLink BC.

Hemorrhoids

- Itching, burning, swelling (with or without pain), or presence of a lump around the anus/rectum, and/or
- Bright red blood during/after a bowel movement (may be light spotting on toilet paper or drops of blood in toilet bowl)

Read more about [hemorrhoids](#) at HealthLink BC.

Hives and itching, including from bug bites (urticaria)

- Small bumps or blisters that may be painful, itchy and/or swollen
- May feel like a sharp burning pain or stinging

Read more about [dry skin and itching](#) at HealthLink BC.

Impetigo

- Small blisters on skin that ooze fluid, then dry to form yellow-brown crust
- Usually appears around nose and mouth
- May itch, but usually not painful

Read more about [impetigo](#) at HealthLink BC.

Menstrual pain

- Pain and cramps in the lower abdomen (belly), and/or
- Pain in the lower back that starts a few hours before a period

Read more about [menstrual pain](#) at HealthLink BC.

Nicotine dependence

Pharmacists can start you on a free 12-week course of nicotine patches, lozenges or gum. They can also prescribe the oral medications varenicline or bupropion, which you may have to pay for some or all of, depending on your [PharmaCare coverage](#).

Meet with a pharmacist to get help quitting cigarettes or using other tobacco products.

Read more about [how to quit smoking](#) at HealthLink BC.

Pink eye (conjunctivitis)

- Red eye(s) plus discharge that is watery and mucus-like, or that is thick and white, yellow or green, and/or
- Scratchy, burning, itching or the feeling that something is in the eye

Read more about [pink eye](#) at HealthLink BC.

Pinworms and threadworms

- Itchy anus and belly pain are common, although some people have no symptoms

Note: Diagnosis usually involves visual inspection of worms or using adhesive to trap eggs for examination.

Read more about [pinworms](#) at HealthLink BC.

Shingles

- Painful, blistering rash on one side of face or body, and
- Pain, burning, tingling or numbness around affected area 1-5 days before rash appears

Read more about [shingles](#) at HealthLink BC.

Skin rash (dermatitis)

Includes diaper rash and seborrheic, contact, allergic, and atopic dermatitis.

Symptoms may include one or more of the following:

- Dry, red, and itchy skin
- Cracked and oozing blisters
- Scaly and patchy skin

Read more about [eczema \(atopic dermatitis\)](#) and [allergic reaction](#) at HealthLink BC.

Sprains and strains (musculoskeletal pain)

- Pain, swelling or tenderness (mild to medium severity)
- Redness or bruising
- Limited range of motion with muscle weakness
- Injury associated with overworking or straining

Read more about [ankle sprain](#) at HealthLink BC.

Thrush (oral fungal infection)

- White or cream-white spots/patches on lips, inside mouth, on tongue and/or roof of mouth
- Cottage cheese-like appearance
- Patches can be scraped off
- May experience dry mouth and/or loss of taste

Read more about [thrush](#) at HealthLink BC.

Upset stomach (indigestion)

- Common symptoms include heartburn, nausea, bloating, stomach discomfort, feeling full soon after eating, burping up food, stomach acid or gas.

Read more about [indigestion \(dyspepsia\)](#) at HealthLink BC.

Urinary tract infection (uncomplicated)

Symptoms typically include:

- Frequent urination, pain while urinating, and difficulty holding in urine
- Cloudy or foul-smelling urine

If you are pregnant or male, please visit a doctor or nurse practitioner.

Read more about this condition at HealthLink BC:

- Uncomplicated urinary tract infections in [teenagers and adults](#)
- Urinary tract infections in [children](#)
- [Complicated urinary tract infections](#) (cannot be assessed by a pharmacist)

Yeast infection (vaginal candidiasis)

- Vaginal itch, irritation and redness with white, cottage cheese-like discharge

Read more about [yeast infections](#) at HealthLink BC.

Contraceptives (birth control)

Pharmacists can prescribe and dispense contraceptives. Many contraceptives are [free](#) for B.C. residents (many contraceptive pills, IUDs, implant, injection, ring, morning-after pill, i.e., emergency oral contraception)

Visit HealthLink BC for more information on [birth control](#).