



Australian Government
Department of Health

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS NEW ARRANGEMENTS FROM 1 JULY 2015

PHARMACEUTICAL BENEFITS SCHEME (PBS) New options for HIV and Hepatitis B medicine supply

OVERVIEW OF CHANGES TO IMPROVE PATIENT ACCESS

From 1 July 2015, improvements will be made to the way some PBS medicines under the Highly Specialised Drugs Programme will be processed. The process for prescribing and dispensing HIV antiretroviral therapy (ART), clozapine for maintenance therapy, and hepatitis B medicines will be simplified.

These changes will make it easier for practitioners to prescribe and for patients to have their prescription/s dispensed, better reflecting current clinical practice where treatment is increasingly being provided in the community setting.

Patients will be able to access these medicines from the pharmacy of their choice, regardless of whether these medicines are prescribed in a hospital or community setting. Under current arrangements, eligible community based prescribers and patients are required to be associated with a hospital to be able to access PBS subsidised HIV ART, clozapine and hepatitis B medicines. From 1 July 2015, this will no longer be required.

The process to prescribe these medicines will be the same for all prescribers, with STREAMLINED PBS Authority prescription requirements applying for community, private and public hospital based prescribers. Telephone-based PBS Authority approval will still be required prior to prescribing increased PBS quantities and/or increased repeats.

The prescribing and dispensing arrangements for all other HSD medicines will remain unchanged. *A separate FAQ document is available on the changes affecting clozapine.*

FOR PATIENTS

What is changing for patients?

Under the new arrangements, regardless of where the medicine is prescribed, patients may have prescriptions for HIV ART and Hepatitis B medicines dispensed from a pharmacy of their choice. Patients will no longer have to be receiving care at or from a hospital to be prescribed these medicines under the HSD programme. All other patient eligibility criteria are unchanged.

Patients will continue to pay a PBS patient co-payment which will contribute to their PBS Safety Net record.

How are prescriptions written prior to 1 July 2015 to be handled?

Prescriptions dated prior to 1 July 2015, and their repeats, must be dispensed under the current (hospital-based) arrangements, noting that some hospitals have formal arrangements with community pharmacies that act as agencies for the hospital to dispense medicines.

HIV ART and HEPATITIS B medicines

FOR PRESCRIBERS

What is changing for prescribers?

From 1 July 2015, community based practitioners authorised under state and territory arrangements to prescribe HIV ART, and hepatitis B medicines will be able to do so without the need to demonstrate an association with a hospital. All other prescriber eligibility criteria required under the PBS remain the same.

The process to prescribe these medicines will be the same for all eligible prescribers, with STREAMLINED PBS Authority prescription requirements applying for community, private hospital and public hospital based prescribers. Telephone-based PBS Authority approval will still be required prior to prescribing increased PBS quantities and/or increased repeats.

Prescribers will no longer need to provide a hospital provider number on the PBS prescription. The current STREAMLINED authority approvals process for public prescribers will also be extended to private prescribers.

Prescribers are still required to prescribe in accordance with PBS restriction criteria and keep evidence of compliance and patient eligibility on patient records. To prescribe a medicine under these arrangements, a prescriber is required to include the STREAMLINED authority code on the authority prescription.

How does the streamlined authority process work?

Streamlined authority items are identified in the PBS Schedule with the heading 'Authority required (STREAMLINED)'. A pre-determined, 4-digit streamlined authority code applies to each restriction for a streamlined authority item.

To prescribe a STREAMLINED authority item, a prescriber is required to include the streamlined authority code on the authority prescription. By doing so, the prescriber is acknowledging that they are eligible to prescribe the item under the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, and that the use of the medicine complies with the PBS subsidy restrictions applying on the date of prescribing.

STREAMLINED authority codes are listed in the PBS Schedule. The schedule is available on www.pbs.gov.au. Prescribing software also includes streamlined authority codes.

How do I prescribe increased quantities or additional repeats of a community access item?

For an increased quantity of the item, or for additional repeats above those specified in the PBS schedule, it is necessary to contact the Department of Human Services (Medicare) or the Department of Veterans' Affairs to obtain a PBS Authority approval number.

What sort of hospital prescription will be valid at community pharmacies?

Apart from the usual patient details, including Medicare number, and medicine name, strength, dosage, quantity and adequate directions for use, PBS prescriptions for HIV ART and Hepatitis B medicines will need to include both the relevant STREAMLINED Authority code and the PBS Authority prescription number. Pre-printed PBS hospital HSD Authority stationery is ideal for this purpose. In-house hospital prescriptions which permit multiple items to be prescribed on one prescription are generally not acceptable for community dispensing and PBS claiming.

HIV ART and HEPATITIS B medicines

FOR PHARMACIES

What is changing for pharmacy?

For valid PBS prescriptions written on and from 1 July 2015, all approved pharmacies will be able to dispense HIV ART and hepatitis B medicines provided through the HSD programme regardless of whether the medicine is prescribed in a hospital or community setting. Hospital authorities approved under section 94 of the *National Health Act 1953* are currently not permitted to dispense prescriptions for patients that are not receiving treatment in or at a hospital. Legislation will be in place for the commencement of these new arrangements on 1 July 2015 that will exempt private and public hospital pharmacies from this prohibition, for specified medicines. This will permit public and private hospital pharmacies to dispense prescriptions for HIV ART, clozapine and Hepatitis B medicines that have been written in a community setting for a patient not receiving treatment at or from a hospital.

To claim a STREAMLINED PBS Authority item, an approved supplier is required to check that the appropriate STREAMLINED Authority code has been included on the PBS prescription.

What are the pharmacy remuneration arrangements for these medicines?

The level of hospital pharmacy remuneration will remain unchanged. Community pharmacies will receive remuneration using the section 100 Highly Specialised Drugs private hospital formula. Note that remuneration is based on point of supply, rather than the point of prescribing.