

9. ADDITIONAL BENEFITS AND SERVICES FOR BC RESIDENTS

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9. ADDITIONAL BENEFITS AND SERVICES FOR BC RESIDENTS

9.1 PharmaCare

PharmaCare is the provincial drug program that protects British Columbia residents from high drug costs by helping with the expense of prescription drugs and designated medical supplies. PharmaCare's mission is to improve the health of British Columbians by ensuring reasonable access to, and appropriate use of, prescription drugs.

Eligibility

Most British Columbia residents are eligible for assistance under one or more of the following PharmaCare plans:

Fair PharmaCare—which provides assistance based on family net income.

Plan B — Permanent residents of licensed long-term care facilities.

Plan C — Recipients of BC Income Assistance.

Plan D — Cystic Fibrosis patients.

Plan F — Children enrolled in the At-Home Program.

Plan G — No Charge Psychiatric Medication.

Plan P — Palliative Care Drug Program

PharmaCare Coverage

The following items are covered by PharmaCare:

- Eligible medications prescribed by a physician, dentist, midwife, podiatrist, nurse practitioner or optometrist licensed and practising in British Columbia.
- Insulin, needles and syringes for patients with insulin-dependent diabetes.
- Blood glucose monitoring strips for patients with diabetes who have a Certificate of Training from an approved Diabetic Education Centre.
- Certain ostomy supplies.
- Designated, pre-approved permanent prosthetic appliances and children's orthotic devices (braces).

The following items are not covered by PharmaCare:

- Prescriptions purchased outside the province.
- Mail order prescriptions from pharmacies located outside BC.
- Vacation supplies.
- Eyeglasses.
- Hearing aids or hearing aid batteries.
- Patent medicines.
- Bandages.
- Artificial sweeteners.
- Antacids, laxatives, and other over-the-counter drugs (except for patients eligible for Plan P).
- Wheelchairs, walkers, and other medical devices.
- Drug costs which have been fully reimbursed by another insurer (e.g., the Insurance Corporation of BC, Workers' Compensation Board, Non-Insured Health Benefits Program or the RCMP).

Plan Descriptions

Fair PharmaCare

Fair PharmaCare is an income-based assistance plan; the lower the family's net income, the more assistance the government provides in paying for eligible prescription and medical supply costs.

Under this plan, the level of assistance is based on the family's net income as reported to the Canada Revenue Agency two years ago. For instance, assistance for 2006 would be based on family net income for 2004.

To receive assistance under Fair PharmaCare, applicants must:

- Be a resident of British Columbia for at least three months; and
- Have effective Medical Services Plan of British Columbia (MSP) coverage; and
- Have filed an income tax return for the relevant taxation year and subsequent years and provide consent for PharmaCare to verify their net income with the Canada Revenue Agency each year.

The following table estimates Fair PharmaCare financial assistance for those born in 1940 or later. Once the net family income has been verified by the Canada Revenue Agency, PharmaCare provides a written confirmation of applicable deductible.

Note: Families that include someone born in 1939 or earlier qualify for enhanced financial assistance under the Fair PharmaCare plan.

Net Annual Family Income	Family Deductible	Portion of Eligible Costs Paid by PharmaCare (after deductible)	Family Maximum (after which 100% of eligible costs are covered)
Less than \$15,000	None - Government assists with drug costs immediately.	70% of eligible prescription drug costs	Equal to approximately 2% of net income
Between \$15,000 and \$30,000	Equal to approximately 2% of net income	70% of eligible prescription drug costs	Equal to approximately 3% of net income
Over \$30,000	Equal to approximately 3% of net income	70% of eligible prescription drug costs	Equal to approximately 4% of net income

Plan B - Permanent Residents of Licensed Long-Term Care Facilities

Permanent residents of licensed long-term care facilities automatically receive 100% coverage of prescriptions. No registration is required.

Plan C - Recipients of BC Income Assistance

This plan provides 100% coverage of eligible prescription costs for BC residents receiving income assistance through the Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance (EIA). Eligibility for the plan is determined by EIA.

Plan D - Cystic Fibrosis

Individuals registered with one of four provincial Cystic Fibrosis (CF) Clinics immediately receive 100% coverage of digestive enzymes through Plan D. Other Cystic Fibrosis items, such as nutritional supplements and vitamins, are not covered under Plan D, but may be covered under Fair PharmaCare or Plan C for eligible individuals.

Plan F - Children in the At-Home Program

The *At-Home Program* of the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) provides community-based, family-style care for severely handicapped children who would otherwise have to rely on institutional care. Children who are eligible either for medical or full benefits under this program immediately receive 100% coverage of eligible prescription drugs and certain medical supplies.

Plan G - Clients of Mental Health Service Centres

Clients of Mental Health Service Centres (MHSC) receive 100% coverage of certain psychiatric medications. The patient's medical practitioner and the Mental Health Service Centre determine eligibility.

Palliative Care Drug Plan

Individuals eligible for the Palliative Care Benefits Program receive:

- PharmaCare coverage for medications listed in the *Palliative Care Drug Formulary* through PharmaCare's Palliative Care Drug Plan
- Certain medical supplies and equipment through the local health authority.

A physician submits an application on behalf of the patient to the Ministry of Health.

For more information about PharmaCare:

Web site: www.healthservices.gov.bc.ca/pharme

Telephone: Vancouver 604-683-7151
Rest of BC (toll-free) 1-800-663-7100

Mail: PharmaCare
Ministry of Health
PO Box 9655 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria BC V8W 9P2

9.2 Midwifery Services

Midwifery services are a benefit to eligible BC residents. The BC Midwifery Program is funded by the Ministry of Health and payments for midwifery services are made through the MSP claims submission and processing system.

Midwifery services provided to MSP beneficiaries out of the province are not covered by the BC Ministry of Health Midwifery Program.

Midwives in B.C. offer primary health care to healthy pregnant women and their newborn babies from early pregnancy, through labour and birth, and up to six weeks postpartum.

. The College of Midwives of British Columbia is the regulatory body for the profession of midwifery in B.C. and is there to protect the interests of the public. Midwives practicing in B.C. must be registered with the College and with the Midwives Association of B.C.

For more information about midwifery services in B.C.:

Midwives Association of BC: <http://www.bcmidwives.com/>

College of Midwives' of BC: <http://www.cmbc.bc.ca/>

9.3 Healthy Kids Program

Healthy Kids is a program that extends basic dental and vision care to children in low and moderate income families, and to children receiving services through the Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance (MEIA - formerly the Ministry of Human Resources) who are not eligible for enhanced MEIA-sponsored coverage. Healthy Kids is one of government's many programs to assist low-income families.

The Healthy Kids program is available to children age 18 and under of low and moderate income families who are not already covered by federal or employer-sponsored insurance plans. Eligibility for this program is determined using the Medical Services Plan (MSP) premium subsidy formula. There are limitations to the total amount covered in a year.

Children in low income families who receive any level of MSP premium assistance may be eligible for basic optical and dental coverage, at MEIA approved rates, under Healthy Kids.

To receive the assistance, families must advise their dentist, optician or optometrist to confirm with the ministry contractor that their children are covered under Healthy Kids, prior to treatment.

Note: Healthy Kids is not a reimbursement program. Families will not be reimbursed by the ministry if they have already paid a dentist or other health care practitioner for services.

For more information about the Healthy Kids initiative, contact the Health Assistance Branch toll free at:

1 800 748-1144.

9.4 Interpreter Services for Hearing-Impaired Patients

The Supreme Court of Canada has ruled that the Medical Services Commission and hospitals in British Columbia must provide interpretation services for deaf persons when such services are required for effective communication between the patient and the physician.

As a result, the Ministry of Health has introduced a sign language interpretation service to assist deaf, deaf and blind, and hard-of-hearing patients when they require medical care.

The program features a 24-hour telephone access line hosted by the Western Institute for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing in Vancouver. This agency provides information to health care providers, communicates with deaf persons, and coordinates the availability of interpreters for medically required physician and hospital services.

HEARING IMPAIRED TELEPHONE SERVICE NUMBERS		
FOR EMERGENCY MEDICAL INTERPRETATION SERVICES:		
TTY line (hearing impaired):	Vancouver	736-7078
	Rest of BC	1-877-736-7078
Voice Line:	Vancouver	736-7039
	Rest of BC	1 877-736-7039
FOR GENERAL APPOINTMENTS AND INFORMATION:		
TTY line (hearing impaired):	Vancouver	736-7099
	Rest of BC	1 877-736-7099
Voice Line:	Vancouver	736-7012
	Rest of BC	1-877-736-7099
FOR GENERAL APPOINTMENTS AND EMERGENCY MEDICAL INTERPRETATION SERVICES - VANCOUVER ISLAND:		
Voice Line only:	877- 667-5488 or 592-8147	

9.5 BC HealthGuide

The BC HealthGuide program consists of three resources for use by BC for seeking information on prevention and treatment of many illnesses.

BC NurseLine

Health information and advice is offered through a toll-free telephone line. You may call toll-free in BC and speak to a registered nurse available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, or to a pharmacist available 5 p.m. to 9 a.m., 7 days a week. The service is also available for those who are deaf or hearing impaired. Translation services are available in 130 languages.

BC NurseLine Telephone Numbers

Greater Vancouver:	604 215-4700
Elsewhere within BC (toll-free):	1 866 215-4700
Deaf and hearing-impaired (toll-free):	1 866 889-4700

BC HealthGuide OnLine

Information on more than 3,000 common health topics, tests, procedures and other resources is available to BC residents online. This secure health database contains medically approved information from the Healthwise® Knowledgebase. <http://www.bchealthguide.org>

BC HealthGuide Handbook

The BC HealthGuide Handbook provides symptom-based information to help recognize, seek and carry out appropriate treatment for 190 common health concerns. The BC HealthGuide Handbook is endorsed by the British Columbia Medical Association, the British Columbia College of Family Physicians, the Registered Nurses Association of British Columbia, and the College of Pharmacists of British Columbia.

BC residents can obtain a copy of the BC BC HealthGuide Handbook or BC First Nations Health Handbook by contacting the BC HealthGuide Program at the Ministry of Health.

Mail:

BC HealthGuide
Ministry of Health Services
4th floor, 1515 Blanshard St.
Victoria BC V8W 3C8

Call toll-free: 1-800-465-4911

E-mail: HLTH.hlth@govbc.ca
(include name, address & postal code)