

Changes to PharmaCare Coverage Criteria for Proton Pump Inhibitors Effective July 15, 2003

Proton Pump Inhibitors include the brand name drugs Losec[®], Pantoloc[®], Prevacid[®] and Nexium[®] and Pariet[®].

Proton Pump Inhibitors are used to reduce gastric acid secretion in patients with ulcers, Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD) (severe heartburn) and other related conditions.

Since their introduction, Proton Pump Inhibitors (PPIs) have been in increasing demand. Although they are extremely effective medications, the cost and wide use of PPIs exerts significant cost pressure on the PharmaCare program (\$35 million in 2001) and on consumers.

Recently, a new PPI called Pariet[®] was introduced. In multiples of the 10 mg tablet, Pariet[®] costs about 40% less than an equivalent daily dosage of the market leader, Losec[®]. Using Pariet[®] instead of a more expensive brand could result in substantial savings for PharmaCare and for those patients who must pay some, or all, of their own drug costs.

As a result, PharmaCare is changing the way it provides Special Authority for coverage of PPIs. Effective **July 15, 2003**, PharmaCare will require patients who qualify for Special Authority coverage of PPIs to try treatment with Pariet[®] first.

What if I am already taking another PPI?

If you require long-term PPI treatment, your Special Authority for that particular PPI will remain in effect until its usual expiry date or until midnight **January 14, 2004**, whichever comes first.

An indefinite Special Authority for Pariet[®] 10 mg tablets has already been entered on your PharmaNet record. This means your physician will not need to submit a request for Special Authority for Pariet[®] for you but you will require a new prescription from your doctor for rabeprazole.

What happens if Pariet[®] isn't effective for me?

If you try treatment with Pariet[®] for a reasonable length of time and it is not effective or is not well tolerated, your physician can submit an application for Special Authority coverage of all other PPIs. If you have already tried Pariet[®] and were subsequently prescribed another PPI under a PharmaCare Special Authority, you will continue to be covered.

How often must my Special Authority coverage be renewed?

If you require long-term PPI treatment and are granted Special Authority coverage for Pariet[®] (or, after trying Pariet, are granted a Special Authority for other PPIs), the approval period is now indefinite.

For PharmaCare information, please visit our Web site at www.healthservices.gov.bc.ca/pharme or call PharmaCare:

Victoria.....(250) 952-2866
Lower Mainland.....(604) 682-6849
Elsewhere in B.C..... (toll-free) 1-800-554-0250

How can I find out when my current Special Authority expires?

If necessary, you can contact PharmaCare at the telephone numbers provided on the front page of this sheet to find out when your Special Authority expires.

Will switching to Pariet® mean my prescription will cost less?

If you pay all, or some, of your own prescription costs, your payment towards your prescription for Pariet® will be less than you would have paid for another PPI medication.

Can I choose to continue with the PPI that I am already taking?

Yes, but in this case, the eligible cost of your prescription will not count towards your PharmaCare deductible and, if you reach your deductible, PharmaCare would not cover any of the costs of the prescription.

Also, some private and extended health insurance providers require their clients to have PharmaCare Special Authority before they agree to cover any of the prescription cost.

Are there any circumstances under which PharmaCare will not require patients to try Pariet?

The only exceptions will be for patients receiving short-term 'triple therapy' for the most common cause of ulcers, helicobacter pylori infection, or for patients with certain severe complicated conditions who are already stabilized on another PPI. Your physician will advise PharmaCare if this is the case when your physician submits the Special Authority request on your behalf.

A specialist prescribed the PPI that I am currently taking. Does that mean only the specialist can change my prescription to Pariet®?

No. Both your specialist and your general practitioner can prescribe Pariet®.