



Pharmaceutical Services Division, B.C. Ministry of Health

## BC PALLIATIVE CARE BENEFITS PROGRAM

**The BC Palliative Care Benefits Program supports individuals of any age who have reached the end stage of a life-threatening disease or illness and who wish to receive palliative care at home.**

Under the program, eligible patients receive:

- coverage of medications used in palliative care through PharmaCare’s BC Palliative Care Drug Plan (Plan P), and
- medical supplies and equipment through the Palliative Medical Supplies and Equipment Component of the program.

Benefits under the drug plan continue as long as the person is considered in need of palliative care.

### Who is eligible?

Any B.C. resident\* who wishes to receive palliative care at home can ask their physician to assess their medical eligibility for the program and submit an application on their behalf.

“Home” is defined as wherever the person is living, whether in their own home, with family or friends, or in a supportive or assisted living residence or hospice that is not a licensed residential care facility covered under PharmaCare Plan B.

### How the program works

The BC Palliative Care Benefits Program has two components:

- PharmaCare BC Palliative Care Drug Plan (Plan P)
- Palliative Medical Supplies and Equipment Component, provided by health authorities

\* Note: BC residents covered by Health Canada’s Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB) Program or Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC) need PharmaCare coverage of drug costs only for medications not covered by NIHB or VAC. Members of the Canadian Forces and RCMP receive coverage through their employer and thus are not eligible for this program.

### What does the BC Palliative Care Drug Plan cover?

This plan provides 100% coverage of the eligible costs of the prescription drugs and selected over-the-counter (OTC) drugs needed for palliative care and treatment at home.



Medications covered by the plan include:

- prescription medications prescribed for pain, symptom control and improved quality of life
- selected OTC drugs needed to supplement the prescription drugs and considered medically-necessary adjuncts for quality palliative care

The plan covers only the medications listed in the Plan P formulary available at

[www.health.gov.bc.ca/pharmacare/outgoing/palliative-formulary.pdf](http://www.health.gov.bc.ca/pharmacare/outgoing/palliative-formulary.pdf)

For coverage of the OTC drugs in the BC Palliative Care Drug Plan formulary, the patient’s physician must write a prescription for the medication. This allows the pharmacy to process a claim for the medication in PharmaCare’s computer system, PharmaNet.

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### What does the Medical Supplies and Equipment Component cover?

This component provides palliative patients who are being cared for at home with some of the same medical supplies and equipment they would get if they were in hospital.

The Ministry of Health funds health authorities to deliver this component of the BC Palliative Care Benefits Program.

Palliative medical supplies and equipment needed to provide safe palliative care at home include certain:

- medication administration supplies, such as needles and syringes
- intravenous therapy supplies
- urinary and incontinence supplies
- wound care supplies
- drug delivery pumps
- equipment such as walkers, wheelchairs, mechanical lifts, commodes, bathing aids and hospital beds.

Health authorities provide these supplies/equipment at no charge to eligible palliative patients.

A patient's ongoing need for palliative care supplies and equipment is assessed at least monthly. If they no longer need palliative care, the health authority may begin charging for the supplies and equipment.

### Submitting an Application

Once a physician has certified that a patient meets the medical criteria, the physician completes a *BC Palliative Care Benefits Program Application* and faxes it to Health Insurance BC (for PharmaCare drug coverage) and to the Home and Community Care Office of the local health authority (for coverage of medical supplies and equipment).

Drug coverage begins as soon as PharmaCare processes the application (normally within 12 hours).

Coverage of medical supplies and equipment begins as soon as the home and community care office of the local health authority has assessed the patient's palliative needs.

To confirm enrollment in the BC Palliative Care Drug Plan, the individual, physician or pharmacist can contact Health Insurance BC (HIBC) at:

- 604-683-7151 (Vancouver)
- 1-800-663-7100 (Rest of BC)

Once the application is processed, prescriptions can be filled at any pharmacy in British Columbia.

Arrangements will be made through the Home and Community Care office of the local health authority for an assessment of the medical supplies and equipment required.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

### BC Palliative Care Drug Plan:

Call Health Insurance BC (HIBC) at

- 604-683-7151 (from Greater Vancouver)
- 1-800-663-7100 (from the rest of B.C.)

### PharmaCare, including Fair PharmaCare

Visit our website at

[www.health.gov.bc.ca/pharmacare](http://www.health.gov.bc.ca/pharmacare)

or call HIBC at

- 604-683-7151 (from Greater Vancouver)
- 1-800-663-7100 (from the rest of BC)

### Medical Supplies and Equipment Component:

Contact the Home and Community Care office of your local health authority (in the blue pages of your telephone directory) or the Health and Seniors Information Line at:

- 250-952-1742 (from Victoria)
- 1-800-465-4911 (from the rest of B.C.)

### Health Authorities

For B.C health authority contact information, visit the Ministry of Health's website at

[www.health.gov.bc.ca/socsec/contacts.html](http://www.health.gov.bc.ca/socsec/contacts.html)

or look for them in the blue pages of your telephone book.