

PharmaCare Patient Information Sheet



Why you no longer get rewards for the PharmaCare paid portion of your prescription

THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH has received complaints from pharmacies and the public about taxpayer money being used to support rewards programs such as loyalty points or coupons that can be redeemed for a free gift, a free vacation or an in-store purchase discount.

THE COMPLAINT is that patients are given rewards for prescription costs that B.C.'s PharmaCare program pays for. In fact, some people may choose more expensive drug options so they can collect more rewards points. The result is that the government subsidizes these reward programs. Taxpayers who don't receive PharmaCare assistance, however, receive no government-subsidized rewards. The Ministry believes this is unfair.

FOR THIS REASON, starting July 4, 2011, the Ministry has asked pharmacies not to offer inducements for any part of the cost that is paid by the BC PharmaCare Program. Pharmacies have agreed to honour this policy. Customers may still receive incentives such as air miles or rewards points on whatever portion of a prescription they pay for themselves.

THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH respects the right of pharmacies to offer incentive programs for customers but does not want taxpayers to subsidize them. The Ministry believes that the funds would be better spent on providing more drug coverage through PharmaCare.

Q. What is an "inducement"?

A. Inducement means such things as cash, points, loyalty points, coupons, discounts, goods, rewards and similar schemes which you can redeem for a gift or other benefit.

Q. Can I still get rewards for the prescription costs I pay for?

A. Yes. Pharmacies can still offer reward points for any part of the cost that you pay for. For example, if PharmaCare pays \$70.00 of a \$100.00 prescription, the pharmacy may offer rewards points for the \$30.00 that you pay.

Q. I have third-party insurance. Can I get rewards for the prescription costs they pay for?

A. PharmaCare's policy does not apply to third-party insurers. They are free to decide whether they will allow patients to receive rewards for the costs they cover.

Q. Do other provinces have the same restrictions?

A. Some other Canadian provinces also have rules and regulations that restrict reward programs for prescription drug purchases and other medical products when the patient is not the payer.