Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS)

What is the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme?

The Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) is a program of the Australian Government that provides timely, reliable, and affordable access to necessary and cost-effective prescription medicines for all Australians. It is part of the wider safety net of the Australian healthcare system and is administered by the Department of Health.

How does it work?

The PBS provides subsidies for a wide range of prescription medications, meaning that when you, as an eligible Australian citizen, fill a prescription at a pharmacy, the cost is significantly reduced. The list of subsidised medicines is called the PBS Schedule, and it's reviewed and updated monthly by the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee (PBAC).

Who can use it?

The PBS is available to all Australian residents who hold a current Medicare card.

How much will I pay for my medication?

The amount you will pay, known as a co-payment, depends on the medicine and your personal circumstances. As of 2021, the maximum general patient co-payment was AUD 41.30, and for concessional patients, it was AUD 6.60. However, these numbers are subject to change yearly, so it's best to confirm the current co-payment rates.

What is the Safety Net?

The PBS Safety Net is designed to protect individuals and families who require a lot of medicines in a year. If you or your family's co-payments reach a certain threshold within a calendar year, your prescription costs are reduced further or might even become free for the rest of the year. Be sure to keep a record of your PBS expenses to take advantage of this benefit.

What is a PBS authority prescription?

Some medications listed on the PBS require special approval before they can be prescribed. These are known as Authority Required (STREAMLINED) or Authority Required (Written) medications. Your doctor will need to contact Services Australia or apply online to obtain this approval.

Can I get all my medications on the PBS?

Not all medications are listed on the PBS Schedule. The PBAC, an independent expert body, makes recommendations to the Australian Government about which drugs should be listed on the PBS, based on factors like effectiveness, safety, and cost-effectiveness. Some newer or more specialised drugs might not be on the PBS.

What if my medication isn't on the PBS?

If a medication isn't listed on the PBS, you may have to pay the full price. However, other programs may provide assistance for certain non-PBS medications, such as the Life Saving Drugs Program.

Further Information

For the most up-to-date information, including current co-payment rates and the PBS Schedule of medications, visit the official PBS website at www.pbs.gov.au. If you have any

questions or concerns about your medication costs, be sure to discuss them with your doctor or pharmacist.

Remember, your healthcare professional is the best source of advice regarding your medication and potential benefits under the PBS.

This information is intended for general informational purposes and should not be used as a substitute for professional medical advice. If you have any health concerns, please see your healthcare provider.

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