



## 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 Program, and
- medical supplies and equipment through the local health authority.

Benefits under the program continue for as long as the person is diagnosed as requiring palliative care.

### Eligibility

All BC residents who are enrolled in the Medical Services Plan\* and who wish to receive palliative care at home can request 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, in a supportive living residence or in a hospice that is not covered under PharmaCare Plan B.

### Benefits

The BC Palliative Care Benefits Program has two components:

- BC Palliative Care Drug Program (Plan P) through PharmaCare
- Palliative Medical Supplies and Equipment Program through the local health authority.

### BC Palliative Care Drug Program

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

Medications covered by the program include:

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

The program does not cover medications not listed in the [program formulary](#), such as vitamins, herbs, or nutritional supplements.

To receive coverage of the OTC drugs in the BC Palliative Care Drug Program formulary, the 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.

\* Please note that individuals covered by the Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB) Program of Health Canada or Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC) will require PharmaCare financial assistance with drug costs only for medications not covered by NIHB or VAC. Members of the Canadian Forces and RCMP receive coverage through their employer and are, therefore, not eligible for this program.

When a prescription for an individual who has been registered for the BC Palliative Care Drug Program is processed at the patient's pharmacy, the pharmacy enters a claim for the prescription(s) on PharmaNet. PharmaCare will then pay the pharmacy directly for the eligible costs of the medication.

### **Medical Supplies and Equipment Program**

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

Medical supplies include necessary medical supplies and equipment needed to provide safe and quality palliative care at home such as:

- medication administration supplies such as needles and syringes;
- intravenous therapy supplies such as hydration solutions, tubing, catheters, syringes and needles;
- wound care supplies including routine treatment supplies such as sterile dressing supplies and bandages.

Health authorities provide these supplies at no charge to eligible palliative patients. Health authorities also ensure that appropriate equipment is made available to eligible patients.

### **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 health authority (for coverage of medical supplies and equipment).

Coverage for benefits under the BC Palliative Care Drug Program, and for medical equipment and supplies through the health authority, begin as soon as the application has been processed (usually within 12 hours).

To confirm enrollment in the BC Palliative Care Drug Program, the individual, physician or pharmacist may 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**

For additional information, please contact:

- Ministry of Health Service Health InfoLine at (250) 952-1742 or toll-free at 1-800-465-4911
- Health Insurance BC (HIBC), from Vancouver at 604-683-7151 or, from elsewhere in BC, toll free at 1-800-663-7100
- The Home and Community Care office of your local [health authority](#) (please consult the blue pages of your telephone directory).