

HOW DO I KNOW IF A DRUG IS IN THE FORMULARY?

Physicians and pharmacies all have a copy of this book. Many public libraries also have a copy. If you are not able to access a Formulary you can ask your pharmacist or call the Prescription Drug Plan at 1-800-667-7581.

WHY ARE SOME DRUGS NOT INCLUDED IN THE FORMULARY?

There are thousands of drug products on the market. The goal of the Formulary is to list a range and variety of drugs that will enable doctors to choose an effective course of therapy for most patients. Sometimes, a new drug simply doesn't offer enough benefits compared to other drugs or to other treatments and services in the health system.

WHY ARE SOME DRUGS ONLY COVERED BY THE DRUG PLAN FOR CERTAIN PATIENTS?

Some drugs – for example the Multiple Sclerosis drug Betaseron – are covered by the drug plan for those who meet certain medical conditions. Those conditions are designed to identify those patients who will benefit from the drug, based on the scientific evidence. This ensures that those most likely to benefit from these drugs have access to them.

WHAT IF I WANT TO KNOW WHY A DRUG IS NOT COVERED?

You should contact the Prescription Drug Plan at 1-800-667-7581. When the Formulary Committee reviews a drug and does not recommend it for coverage a report is prepared that outlines the information considered and the reason for not recommending the product.

IS THERE AN APPEAL PROCESS TO OBTAIN COVERAGE FOR A DRUG?

The Formulary Committee will consider new scientific information relating to the use of a drug. If you or your doctor feel that some information has been missed in the review process, it can be forwarded to the committee for consideration.

**For more information,
please contact:**

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Drug Plan & Extended Benefits
Branch
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Regina, Saskatchewan
S4S 6X6**

**In Regina: 787-3317
In Saskatchewan:
1-800-667-7581**



**Saskatchewan
Health**

COVERAGE OF NEW DRUGS



Coverage of New Drugs

Every year, dozens of new drug products come on the market in Canada. For each new drug we have to decide – should it be added to our Prescription Drug Plan?

To select drugs for the drug plan, new products are reviewed by two expert committees. They examine the medical benefits of each new drug and its value to the health system and give advice to the Minister of Health.

The process of deciding what to cover under the drug plan is more important than ever as the cost of drugs continues to rise. Some of the drugs coming on the market today can cost up to \$20,000 a year per patient. Often, their benefits are unproven or limited. It's not easy to make decisions under these conditions – but decisions have to be made to ensure the future of our drug plan.

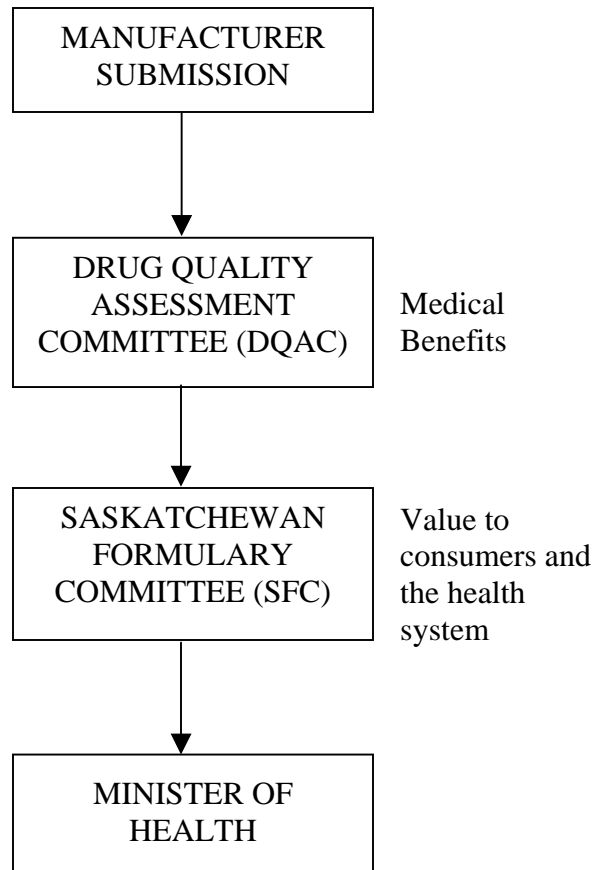
In December 1997, the Minister of Health appointed a Task Force on High Cost Drugs. The Task Force recommended several steps to strengthen the drug approval process and make it more open and accountable to consumers.

This brochure explains the steps in the drug review process, what information is considered, and how consumers can review the results.

HOW THE DRUG APPROVAL PROCESS WORKS:

The following flowchart shows the three distinct steps in the process when a new drug is considered for coverage under the Prescription Drug Plan.

DRUG APPROVAL PROCESS



Drug Quality Assessment Committee (DQAC)

The DQAC is a committee of clinical experts, such as physicians. They consider scientific information and assess how new drugs compare with other available drugs or treatments. This committee only considers how effective and safe new drugs are. It does not consider the cost.

Saskatchewan Formulary Committee (SFC)

The SFC is made up of health care professionals. This committee looks at the clinical information provided by the DQAC and the cost of the drug. This includes the potential number of people who could benefit from the drug and how its use will impact other parts of the health system. The SFC makes a recommendation to the Minister of Health based on the benefits of the drug relative to its cost.

Minister of Health

By law, the Minister of Health is responsible to decide what is covered under the drug plan. The Minister's final decision is based on the recommendations of the two review committees.

WHAT IS THE SASKATCHEWAN FORMULARY?

The Formulary is a list of drugs covered under the Saskatchewan Drug Plan. All physicians and pharmacies receive updates to the Formulary.