Australian Government
Medicare Australia

PBS

Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS)

What is the PBS?

Many types of medicine cost more than the price you pay—some cost hundreds of dollars. Through the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) the Australian Government subsidises the cost of a wide range of prescription medicine. The Repatriation Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (RPBS) provides access to PBS and additional pharmaceutical items for eligible veterans, war widow/widowers and their dependents.

Am I eligible for the PBS?

All Australian residents have access to affordable medicine through the PBS.

PBS medicine is also available to eligible visitors from Italy, New Zealand, the Republic of Ireland, Finland, Norway, Malta, the Netherlands, Sweden, Belgium and the United Kingdom. Australia has Reciprocal Health Care Agreements with these countries.

How much will I pay?

The price you pay for PBS medicine depends on your level of eligibility. From 1 January 2010, at the general rate your patient contribution is up to $33.30# for each PBS medicine. If you have a valid concession card from Centrelink or Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) your patient contribution is at the concession rate of $5.40#.

If you have a DVA White Card for specific conditions and your medicine is for those conditions, your patient contribution will be $5.40#, otherwise you pay at the general rate.

What do I need to do?

To make sure you pay the right amount for your medicine, each time you get a prescription filled show the pharmacist your current:

- Medicare card
- Centrelink or DVA concession card (if you have one)
- PBS Safety Net entitlement or concession card (if you have one).

What happens if I don't have my cards with me?

It is important to have your cards with you when you have your prescription filled. If you don't have your Medicare, concession or Safety Net card you may have to pay a higher amount for your medicine. If this happens, ask your pharmacist for an official PBS refund receipt## (not just a regular docket) and complete a PBS Patient claim for refund form. You can download this form from **www.medicareaustralia.gov.au** or get one at any Medicare office.

Can I ask for a less expensive brand?

You can ask your doctor to prescribe a less expensive brand, or your pharmacist may be able to supply a less expensive or generic brand of your prescribed medicine.

Less expensive or generic brands are just as good. While they may look different, they have the same active ingredients and have met the Therapeutic Goods Administration's high standards of quality, safety and effectiveness.

PBS Safety Net

What is the PBS Safety Net?

If you or your family need a lot of medicine in a year, the PBS Safety Net helps you with the cost of your medicine. Once you or your family reach a Safety Net threshold, you can apply for a PBS Safety Net card—then your PBS medicine will be less expensive or free# for the rest of the calendar year.

What do I need to do?

You need to keep a record of your PBS medicine on a Prescription Record Form (PRF), which you can get from your pharmacy. Each time you have a PBS medicine supplied, give the form to the pharmacist so it can be recorded. Your pharmacist might be able to keep a record for you on their computer, but if they can't, or if you visit different pharmacies, it's best to keep your own records.

If you have a family, ask your pharmacist about combining the amounts you spend for your family Safety Net total.

Who can be included in a Safety Net family?

An eligible PBS Safety Net family consists of you and:

- your spouse or de facto partner
- children under the age of 16 wholly or substantially in your care or the care of your spouse/de facto partner
- full-time students under the age of 25 who are wholly or substantially dependent on you or your spouse/de facto partner.

What are the current Safety Net thresholds?

From 1 January 2010, the threshold for general patients is $1281.30 and for concession card holders it is $324.00.

What happens once I reach the PBS Safety Net threshold?

When you are close to reaching the Safety Net threshold, ask your pharmacist about how to obtain a Safety Net card. Once the pharmacist has issued you a Safety Net card for PBS medicine, for the rest of the calendar year your Safety Net patient contribution will be:

- $5.40# if you are a general patient

or

- free# if you have a concession card.

What if I've received a non PBS prescription?

Your doctor might prescribe a medicine that isn't listed on the PBS, or isn't available on the PBS for your condition—sometimes called a 'private prescription'. Your doctor will indicate this on your prescription and you will need to pay the full price for the medicine at the pharmacy. The cost of non PBS prescriptions does not count towards your PBS Safety Net threshold.

Early supply of medicine under the Safety Net 20 day rule

To keep the PBS affordable for everyone, PBS prescriptions should not be filled earlier than you need them. Under the Safety Net 20 day rule an early repeat supply is one that is made within 20 days after a previous supply of the same medicine.

If you need an early repeat supply, the Safety Net 20 day rule means that, for some PBS medicine, this supply will not count towards the Safety Net threshold. If you have already reached your Safety Net threshold, you will be charged your usual PBS contribution instead of the reduced Safety Net amount.

2010 PBS patient contributions

	General patients	Concession card holders
Patient contribution	Up to $33.30†	$5.40†
Safety Net threshold	$1281.30	$324.00
Safety Net patient contribution	$5.40†	Free†

† If you choose a more expensive brand of medicine, or your doctor prescribes one, you may need to pay more—the extra amount you pay does not count towards your PBS Safety Net threshold.

Summary checklist

- ☑ Take your Medicare card, as well as your DVA or Centrelink concession card and Safety Net card if you have them, when you have your PBS prescription filled.
- ☑ Ask your doctor or pharmacist if there is a less expensive medicine than the one prescribed.
- ☑ Talk to your pharmacist about the PBS Safety Net—keep a PRF or ask your pharmacist to keep a record for you and your family.
- ☑ When you are close to reaching the Safety Net threshold, ask your pharmacist about how to obtain a Safety Net card.

For more information

Online **www.medicareaustralia.gov.au**

Email **pbs@medicareaustralia.gov.au**

Call **1800 020 613****

TTY **1800 552 152**** (hearing or speech impaired)

TIS **131 450*** (Translating and Interpreting Service)

If you choose a more expensive brand of medicine, or your doctor prescribes one, you may need to pay more.
The refund you receive may not cover the full amount you paid for your medicine.
* Call charges apply.
** Call charges apply from mobile and pay phones only.

1577_06b.30.11.09