

Updates regarding COVID-19 Pandemic

Alberta Blue Cross and the Alberta Government would like to recognize the work that you and your staff are putting in as front-line health care professionals. These are extraordinary times and you have met the challenge in an extraordinary way. To support you and your patients, please be advised of the following changes to Alberta Government-Sponsored Drug coverage and the Compensation Plan for Pharmacy Services.

Measures to prevent drug product shortages

Alberta Health, the Alberta Pharmacists' Association, the Alberta College of Pharmacy and Alberta Blue Cross have been in discussions regarding proactive steps to protect the drug supply for Albertans. **Effective immediately the expectation is that prescriptions are provided in quantities that do not exceed a thirty (30) day supply.** Reducing the quantity provided for each prescription will limit product shortages and allow continued access to medications for all Albertans. Similar guidance is being issued across the country.

Alberta Health recognizes the increased financial pressure that monthly prescribing may place on some patients and has adjusted the co-pay structure for the Coverage for Seniors and Non-Group Coverage on a temporary basis. These plans have a co-pay of 30 per cent to a maximum of \$25 per prescription for up to a 100 days supply. Effective Friday, March 20, 2020, this will temporarily change to a co-pay of 30 per cent to a maximum of \$8 per prescription for up to a maximum 30 days supply until further notice.

Alberta Blue Cross has also suspended the approval process for any Quantity Authorizations in excess of 30 days supply. Travel outside of the country is strongly discouraged as per the Government of Canada and Government of Alberta. In addition, the current rules regarding early refills, replacement claims for lost/stolen items, and too early to refill will be maintained as per usual and customary practices.

Introduction of the COVID-19 Pharmacy Services Fee

Alberta Health is introducing a temporary new pharmacy service: **Assessment to Screen and/or Test for Infectious Disease** (assessment code 0071120, SSC - L). Effective immediately an assessment fee of up to \$20 for the **Assessment to Screen and/or Test for Infectious Disease** may be claimed to a **maximum of five claims per pharmacy per day.**

Patient eligibility

- Any Albertan with a valid Personal Health Number that contacts a pharmacist with questions or concerns related to suspected COVID-19 symptoms.

Service deliverables

- The pharmacist will provide information and care in relation to COVID-19, and/or
- The pharmacist will conduct an assessment to determine if a patient is at risk for COVID-19:
 - *Patients suspected to have had contact with or have symptoms indicative of COVID-19 will be directed to call Health Link 811.*
 - *Patients not suspected to be at risk for COVID-19 will be advised.*
- All patients will be provided information about appropriate safety precautions to limit contact, reduce spread, and remain healthy including informing them about the importance of self-care measures, self-isolation, measures to minimize spread with household contacts and social-distancing practices.

Documenting the service

Pharmacists are expected to document the patient care assessment appropriately, as this is a critical component to ensuring proper case management for COVID-19 response, including:

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- Patient demographics: name, DOB, age, address, phone, Personal Health Number (PHN).
- A description of the patient's responses to the screening questions including any additional information provided by the patient, if required.
- A summary of the patient assessment including the level of risk identified and recommendation (call Health Link, self-isolate, etc.), and any additional questions asked by the patient, and the response, as well as any information or resources provided to the patient. Tools to support the provision of the service include the **COVID-19 Self Assessment Online Tool** as well as a printable version available at https://rxa.ca/media/825905/PatientAssessmentForm_COVID19_Full.pdf. Netcare should be accessed to validate medication history, PHNs and demographic information.

Claim submission

The individual's personal health number (PHN) will be used to confirm eligibility. Incorrect submission of the client's eligibility will result in claim rejections with the response code of C8—No record of this beneficiary. Compensation for this service is capped at five claims per pharmacy per day, any additional submitted claims will be subject to reversal and recovery. This service can be claimed in addition to another pharmacy service on the same day (for example, this service and Assessment for a Prescription Renewal could both be claimed for the same patient on the same day).

All claims must be submitted electronically through the Alberta Blue Cross PRIDE RT claims adjudication system with the following data elements:

- Carrier code 16 (as the third-party plan)
- Group number for all transactions must be 23464, Section 000
- Pharmacy license number
- Pharmacist identification number
- Client number: client's Personal Health Number (PHN) as the client number
- Client's full name: last and first name
- Client's date of birth
- Client's gender
- Relationship code: should your software require you to enter a relationship code, zero (0) must be used as the default
- Prescriber reference ID number
- Service date
- PIN 00071120
- Special Service Code L (SSC L)

Extension of Special Authorizations and HBEC approvals

Effective immediately, all special authorization approvals for Alberta government-sponsored plans that term between now and July 1, 2020 will be automatically extended by 12 months.

Additionally, approvals for low income clients for ongoing drug benefits made by the Health Benefits Exception Committee (HBEC) which term between now and August 30, 2020 have been extended by six months.

Please note, only existing approvals will be extended. If new medications are initiated or changes are made to the medication used, a new request is required.

When you have questions:

For assistance with benefit or claim inquiries, please contact an Alberta Blue Cross Pharmacy Services Provider Relations contact centre representative at:

780-498-8370 (Edmonton and area) • **403-294-4041** (Calgary and area) • **1-800-361-9632** (toll free)

FAX 780-498-8406 (Edmonton and area) • **FAX 1-877-305-9911** (toll free)

Alberta Blue Cross offers online access to current Pharmacy Benefits and supplemental claiming information to assist with the submission of your direct bill drug claims. **Visit** ab.bluecross.ca/providers/pharmacy-home.php



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