

# 60-day prescriptions

## Frequently asked questions



### What is the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme?

The Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) is funded by the Australian Government to subsidise the cost of more than 900 prescription medicines.

When you buy a medicine listed on the PBS, the cost is shared between you and the Government. The amount you pay the pharmacist for each prescription is called the co-payment. From 2024, the maximum you pay for most PBS medicines is \$31.60. If you have a concession card, the most you pay is \$7.70.<sup>1</sup>

### What are 60-day prescriptions?

Since 1 September 2023, many people living with an ongoing health condition have been able to buy 60 days' supply of selected PBS-listed medicines on a single prescription.<sup>2</sup> This will reduce the amount people pay for medicines and, for those on only 60-day prescriptions, it will mean fewer visits to the doctor and the pharmacy.

It is estimated that the 60-day prescription option will save Australians **more than \$1.6 billion** over the next four years.

### When did this happen?

60-day prescriptions have been introduced gradually in 3 stages over 12 months. The first stage was introduced on 1 September 2023. The second stage started from 1 March 2024 and the third stage is now available from 1 September 2024.

60-day prescriptions are now available for **almost 300** out of approximately 950 medicines listed on the PBS.

### How do I get a 60-day prescription?

If your medicine is listed for 60-day prescriptions, you can ask your doctor or health professional whether this option is suitable for you. They will use their clinical judgement to decide whether your ongoing health condition is stable and suitable for a new longer prescription of 60 days. You can still use your existing 30-day prescriptions as normal.

### Do I require a Concession Card to be eligible for a 60-day prescription?

No. You do not need a concession card to access a 60-day prescription.

<sup>1</sup> Unless there is a brand price premium. A brand price premium is an additional payment to the manufacturer of a specified brand of a PBS medicine. Brand premiums are only permitted where an alternative, premium free, TGA registered brand is available on the PBS for substitution by the pharmacist. Patients should speak to their pharmacist to discuss dispensing of premium-free alternatives.

<sup>2</sup> If you are a Medicare card holder and do not have a concession card, your saving will be lower if the dispensed cost of the medicine is less than the \$31.60 PBS co-payment. Pharmacies can offer discounts for medicines that cost less than the \$31.60 PBS co-payment. The size of the discount is at the discretion of each pharmacy and can vary over time. Discounts can be applied to medicines available for 30-day and 60-day prescriptions, and the cost is variable between pharmacies. A patient with a Medicare card but no concession card will pay no more than the maximum General Patient Charge for their medicine as shown on the PBS schedule ([www.pbs.gov.au](http://www.pbs.gov.au)).

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### What are the benefits of 60-day prescriptions?

- If your medicine is on the list and your doctor or health professional considers you eligible, you will be able to receive twice the medication on a single prescription.
- Patients who pay the general co-payment of \$31.60 could save up to \$189.60 per medicine per year. If they reach the PBS Safety Net, they will save even more.
- People whose PBS medicines cost less than \$31.60 will still save money. The amount you pay for your prescription may vary depending on where you get your script filled and if you choose a brand name or generic option.
- Concession card holders who do not reach the PBS Safety Net could save up to \$46.20 per medicine per year.
- With a 60-day prescription, patients may save so much on their medicines so that they won't need the Safety Net. Others will reach the Safety Net later in the year, spreading their medicine costs out over a longer period. If patients hit the threshold later in the year, it means they have saved money throughout the year.
- As well as the financial benefit, the changes may save time and reduce travel costs for people in rural and remote areas who live far from their pharmacy.
- Some of the medicines available on 60-day prescriptions are PBS listed with five repeats, meaning this may provide up to 12 months' supply of medicine.
- It is expected that having more medicines on hand will support people to take their medication as prescribed with less chance of running out at home or when travelling.

### What medicines are suitable for 60-day prescriptions?

The list of medicines that are suitable for 60-day prescriptions was recommended by the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee, which advises the Australian Government on the listing of medicines on the PBS.

These include medicines for a range of chronic conditions, such as asthma, anxiety disorders, cardiovascular disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, constipation, chronic renal failure, Crohn's disease, depression, diabetes, epilepsy, eye drops for glaucoma and dry eyes, gout, heart failure, high cholesterol, hormonal replacement and modulation therapy, hypertension, osteoporosis, Parkinson's disease and ulcerative colitis.

You can download a document listing the medicines by clicking [here](#).

### Why are some medicines not included?

Some medicines are not considered suitable for 60-day prescriptions if:

- larger quantities of a medicine could be a safety risk to patients and the community, or if a medicine is new and rare side effects may not be well known
- patients taking certain medicines require regular monitoring such as blood tests, or the dose of a medicine may need to be adjusted often, or where symptoms are unpredictable
- a medicine is prescribed for short-term management of symptoms in chronic diseases.

Your doctor or health professional will decide whether you are best suited to a 60-day or 30-day prescription according to their professional judgement.



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### Will this change affect the supply of medicine?

60-day prescriptions will not increase overall demand for medicines or affect the supply of medicine. Patients will still purchase the same amount of medicine per year, they just need to visit the pharmacy less frequently to buy them.

Most medicines recommended by PBAC for 60-day prescriptions are not in short supply in Australia. If shortages do occur, alternative brands and/or strengths of the same medicine are usually available.

Pharmaceutical companies must tell the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) of expected medicine shortages. Medicines recommended for 60-day prescriptions are monitored to reduce the risk of shortage.

### What do patients and health experts think of this change?

The introduction of 60-day prescriptions for a range of PBS-listed medicines has been welcomed by patients' and doctors' groups, including the Consumers Health Forum of Australia, the Heart Foundation, the Lung Foundation, Breast Cancer Network, Rural Doctors Association, the Australian Medical Association, the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners and many others.



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### Will my local pharmacy lose money and what will the Government do with the savings created by this change?

Australian pharmacies already do much more than processing scripts and have many other sources of income, such as administering vaccinations.

Every dollar saved by the Government will be reinvested straight back into community pharmacies. This funding will help to secure the ongoing strength of the sector and ensure our trusted pharmacists play an even larger role in the healthcare of Australians.

### What is the PBS Safety Net?

The PBS Safety Net helps you pay less for medicines after you've reached a certain amount in a calendar year. This qualifying amount is called the Safety Net threshold.

The threshold is lower for concession card holders. Both the general and concessional thresholds will increase each year in line with the consumer price index.

You and/or your family only need to reach the threshold once in a calendar year. If you qualify for the Safety Net you pay a lower amount for PBS medicines, and concession card holders receive PBS medicines for free, for the rest of that year (plus any applicable premiums). For more information see the [Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme \(PBS\) | The Safety Net Scheme](#).

### What should I do when I reach the Safety Net threshold?

Once you reach the threshold, you can apply for a PBS Safety Net card to get cheaper medicines. To apply, speak to your pharmacist or visit [servicesaustralia.gov.au/pbssafetynet](https://servicesaustralia.gov.au/pbssafetynet) for more information.

