



Access to medicines – Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme

The Australian Government established the New Medicines Funding Guarantee in 2020–21 to meet the cost of future, new and amended Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) medicines listings. As part of the 2021–22 Budget, this Government is investing an additional \$878.7 million in new and amended listings, funded through the Guarantee.

Since the 2020–21 MYEFO, the Government has approved and funded important new medicine listings for the PBS that have been recommended by the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee (PBAC), including treatments for cancer, depression, severe eczema, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), pulmonary arterial hypertension, asthma, migraine and Parkinson’s disease, amongst others.

For the first time, from May 2021, a medicinal cannabis product, Epidyolex® (cannabidiol) has been included on the PBS for use in the treatment of Dravet syndrome (a rare, genetic epileptic encephalopathy that gives rise to seizures), which will save more than 100 Australian patients around \$24,000 a year.

Other new and amended PBS listings include:

- From June 2021, Emgality® (galcanezumab) for the treatment of chronic migraine which, for around 10,000 patients, will mean they are not faced with out of pocket costs up to \$6,800 each year
- From June 2021, Oripro® (progesterone) to prevent women going into premature labour, saving around 14,250 patients around \$300 per course of treatment
- From April 2021, Kisqali® (ribociclib) in combination with Fulvestrant Sandoz® (fulvestrant), which for around 1,600 patients battling unresectable advanced or metastatic breast cancer, they will no longer have costs of \$50,000 per course of treatment
- From April 2021, Evenity® (romosozumab) for the treatment approximately 2,800 patients with severe osteoporosis, which means they will no longer need to pay \$6,300 per course of treatment

- From March 2021, Dupixent® (dupilumab), which will mean around 3,600 Australian patients with severe atopic dermatitis (severe eczema) are not facing an out of pocket bill of \$22,800 per year for their medication
- From March 2021, Trulicity® (dulaglutide) for the treatment of type 2 diabetes mellitus, which mean some 12,000 patients will not have to pay out of pocket costs of more than \$1,700 per year
- From 1 February 2021, Uptravi® (selexipag), for the treatment of pulmonary arterial hypertension. Around 700 patients per year may benefit from this listing. Without PBS subsidy, patients may pay around \$41,000 per year.

The Government will also continue to work with the medicines and technology sectors to continue streamlining and deregulating processes to apply for reimbursement of new products and services. The Government is investing \$36 million in the Health Products Portal, a new one stop shop for applying electronically to the PBAC, Medical Services Advisory Committee (MSAC), and Prostheses List for reimbursement of medicines, medical and diagnostic services and medical devices. This may also speed up access to new therapies for Australian patients.

The Take Home Naloxone (THN) pilot program will continue for an additional year in NSW, SA, and WA. Naloxone is a common medicine used in emergency settings to temporarily reverse an opioid overdose or adverse reaction.

Why is this important?

Listing medicines on the PBS saves and protects lives. The PBS New Medicines Funding Guarantee safeguards the listing of innovative, life-saving and life-changing medicines on the PBS.

Ongoing investment in the PBS means that Australians can access the medicines they need at an affordable price – these medicines can be prohibitively expensive if not subsidised by the PBS.

Interim evaluations have found that the THN pilot program has saved the lives of people who had overdosed on or had an adverse reaction to opioid drugs. More than 36,500 units of naloxone have been supplied for free and without prescription during the pilot.

Extending the THN trial enables more information to be gathered for a proper evaluation and to inform future decisions about establishing a national THN program in Australia.

Who will benefit?

Australian patients will benefit from the addition of new, innovative, life-saving medicines to the PBS. They can also have confidence that the New Medicines Funding Guarantee means decisions to add new medicines will never be jeopardised by funding pressures.

The listing of new medications means the Australian Government will subsidise the cost for patients.

Continuation of the THN pilot will benefit Australians in need, state and territory governments, providers of alcohol and other drug services, pharmacies, and emergency departments

through Commonwealth funding the provision of naloxone. It will have a direct and lifesaving benefit for those people at risk of drug overdose and individuals in contact with them.

The Government will continue to work with the medicines and pharmacy sector to strengthen current PBS policy settings with a focus on:

- guaranteeing the supply of life changing medicines already listed on the PBS
- improving the quality use of medicines through community pharmacy
- providing timely patient access to emerging high cost treatments where there is evidence to support Government subsidy, and
- ensuring value for money for Australian tax payer.

How much will this cost?

The Australian Government is investing \$878.7 million over 5 years, from 2021–22.