

Questions & Answers for Patients: Proposal to make the Ontario Public Drug Programs more efficient and effective through Regulatory Amendments to Ontario Regulation 201/96 made under the *Ontario Drug Benefit Act* and Regulation 935 made under the *Drug Interchangeability and Dispensing Fee Act*

July 23, 2015

The responsible management of health care is part of the government's plan to build a better Ontario through its [Patients First: Action Plan for Health Care](#), providing patients with faster access to the right care, better home and community care, the information they need to live a healthy lifestyle and a health care system that's sustainable for generations to come.

The Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (the "ministry") is ensuring the sustainability of its Ontario Public Drug Programs and patients' access to drugs by proposing to make the program more efficient and effective.

Proposed changes for Fall 2015 implementation include:

- Encouraging the dispensing of 3-month supplies of some chronic medications by establishing a maximum of five dispensing fees per year to be paid to community pharmacies;
- Requiring patients to try more than one interchangeable generic drug product before a brand product is reimbursed by the ministry through the "no substitution" policy;
- Lowering the dispensing fee paid to pharmacies that serve long-term-care home residents;
- Reducing the mark-up paid to pharmacies when dispensing high-cost drugs;
- Housekeeping changes to clarify existing language relating to the conditions for charging co-payments for Ontario Drug Benefit (ODB) Program recipients; and
- Streamlining interchangeability requirements for a limited number of generic drug products.

Questions & Answers

Q1: How would the proposed changes to chronic medication dispensing affect Ontario Drug Benefit (ODB) Program recipients?

A: Community pharmacies would be encouraged to provide most ODB recipients with a full 3-month supply of certain chronic medications where therapy has been stabilized. The proposed changes would make it easier and less expensive for patients to fill their prescriptions by requiring fewer visits to their community pharmacy and fewer co-payments (up to \$6.11, depending on eligibility). It is important to note that patients who require more frequent dispensing due to a disability or impairment would be able to continue to receive their maintenance medication on a more frequent basis by speaking with their pharmacist.

Q2: How would the proposed changes to the “no substitution” policy affect ODB recipients?

A: Under the new policy, the government would require patients to try more than one interchangeable generic drug product before a “no substitution” prescription for a brand product would be reimbursed by the ministry. This maximizes the use of safe and effective generic alternatives and provides better value to taxpayers and the government.

Q3: How would the proposed changes to the Long-Term Care dispensing fees paid to pharmacies servicing Long-Term Care Homes affect ODB recipients?

A: These proposed changes are not expected to impact patients. Residents of Long-Term Care Homes would continue to pay up to \$2.00 towards the cost of their prescriptions through their servicing pharmacy’s usual co-payment arrangements.

Q4: How would the proposed changes to the mark-up paid to pharmacies when dispensing high-cost drugs affect ODB recipients?

A: These proposed changes will not impact patients. The Ontario government currently pays pharmacies an 8 % mark-up on ODB eligible prescription drugs. The proposed changes will reduce the mark-up payment to pharmacies on high cost drugs.

Q5: How would the proposed housekeeping changes to clarify existing language relating to the conditions for charging co-payments affect ODB recipients?

A: These proposed housekeeping changes will not impact patients. ODB-eligible recipients will continue to pay their usual co-payment amount (up to \$6.11, depending on eligibility) when filling their prescription(s).

Q6: How would the proposed changes to the interchangeability requirements for a limited number of generic drug products affect ODB recipients?

A: These proposed changes will not impact patients. In fact, a limited number of generic drug products may now qualify for Formulary listing under the Ontario Drug Benefit program through a simplified review process.

If you have questions or would like to receive more information on these proposed changes, please contact:

Executive Officer, Ontario Public Drug Programs
Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care
80 Grosvenor Street, 9th Floor
Hepburn Block, Queen’s Park
Toronto ON
M7A 1R3
Fax: 416-325-6647
E-mail: PublicDrugPrgrms.moh@ontario.ca