

Expansion of the Safety Net 20 Day Rule Arrangements

What will the measure do?

This measure extends the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) early supply provisions, known as the Safety Net 20 Day Rule (SN20DR), to apply to a broader range of PBS listed medicines, as recommended by the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee (PBAC).

This change recognises it is important to ensure an appropriate interval is maintained for patients in filling PBS and Repatriation Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme prescriptions (eg 20 days). While this change does not stop supply within this interval, it means that if resupply is, for example within the 20 days, the patient's usual co-payment will not count towards their safety net threshold.

This change, which extends the original SN20DR policy, reflects the PBAC recommending the default position should be all medicines that are suitable for inclusion in the SN20DR should fall under these arrangements, unless evidence is provided to the contrary. It will therefore improve the consistency of access to consumers – an important principle of the PBS.

Medicines specifically excluded from this rule include treatments for cancer, palliative care and individual treatments with high dosage variability. Further, the policy does not affect the operation of special provisions which allow a prescriber to direct that all repeats of a PBS prescription be supplied at the one dispensing, should there be a need, clinical or otherwise, to do so.

What is the impact?

Under this measure, the financial incentive for patients to obtain excess supplies in advance of treatment is removed. This measure supports the quality use of PBS medicines by discouraging access in advance, or in excess, of therapeutic need, reducing quantities of unused medicines in the community, and reducing waste.

The implementation date of 1 January 2016 is in line with the PBS safety net which operates by calendar year. Changes to pharmacy software and the Department of Human Services claims systems will be required.