

## **PBS Safety Net Early Supply Rule**

### **Consumer Frequently Asked Questions**

The PBS helps to make your medicines affordable by limiting the amount you pay. To keep the PBS affordable for everyone, PBS medicines should not be obtained earlier than you need them.

The Safety Net 20 day rule, introduced in 2006, changed the way the Safety Net works for an early supply of certain PBS medicines.

From 1 January 2016, expanded PBS early supply provisions will replace the Safety Net 20 day rule and extend early supply rules to apply to more medicines.

#### **What you need to know if you need an early supply of your medicine**

There are arrangements to allow a repeat PBS prescription to be dispensed early if you need it to continue your treatment. Always ask your pharmacist if you need an early resupply of your PBS medicine. However, for some medicines an early repeat dispensing may not be eligible for Safety Net benefits.

The Safety Net early supply rule applies to Pharmaceutical benefits if the prescription is:

- supplied within 20 days of a previous supply, usually for a month's quantity, of the same medicine or any brand of an equivalent medicine to the same person under 'immediate supply' provisions
- supplied within 50 days of a previous supply of a 60-day maximum dispensed quantity (60-day prescription) of the same medicine or any brand of an equivalent medicine to the same person under 'immediate supply' provisions.

#### **What is the effect of the Safety Net early supply rule?**

The Safety Net early supply rule means that, for some PBS medicines, a repeat supply of the same medicine within less than a specified interval will fall outside the Safety Net.

If the early supply rule applies for a prescription, this means that:

- your patient payment for that prescription will not count towards your Safety Net threshold
- your pharmacist cannot discount the PBS Patient co-payment amount
- if you have reached the Safety Net threshold, the charge will be your usual pre-Safety Net PBS payment – not the reduced Safety Net amount.

Although early resupplies of some medicines won't be eligible for the Safety Net, the most you will pay is your usual PBS patient payment.

#### **Why is the Safety Net early supply rule needed?**

Safety Net entitlements can act as an incentive to obtain additional quantities of medicines earlier than they are needed. The early supply rules encourage responsible use of the PBS.

Reducing unnecessary dispensing of repeat supplies supports good practice for safe use of medicines and helps to make best use of funding for the PBS.

### **Which medicines fall under the Safety Net early supply rule?**

Early supply rules generally apply to PBS medicines used for long-term therapy and to other medicines where the quantity than can be supplied at each dispensing means that early resupply should not be required. Medicines specified for early supply cover a wide range of therapeutic categories, but not those for supply under special programmes, or for palliative care use. Early supply does not generally apply to medicines for acute conditions or short-term use (eg antibiotics).

The Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee (PBAC) provides advice about application of the Safety Net early supply rule to ensure it is only used where it is appropriate.

More information on which medicines are specified for early supply purposes is at:

Safety Net early supply rule - List of medicines

### **What about different strengths or formulations of the same drug?**

Where different strengths or formulations of the same medicine are required, the Safety Net early supply rule has no effect as it applies only where the same PBS item or an equivalent item (any brand) is resupplied early for the same person.

### **What if I need an early resupply because I have run out of medicine?**

People who use a large number of medicines or are prescribed higher dosages should not usually need to have additional or early prescriptions dispensed.

PBS prescriptions should provide you with enough medicine for the dosage your doctor has prescribed. If you run out of medicine because you are taking an increased dose or more than the prescribed dose, discuss this with the pharmacist and with your doctor.

### **What about repeat supplies under the long distance provisions?**

The special provisions regarding supply of more than one repeat of a prescription at the same time due to distance from a pharmacy are unchanged. Usual Safety Net benefits apply provided the supply of the larger quantity is not itself within the early supply period.

### **Does the Safety Net early supply rule apply to Repatriation Benefits?**

Yes, where the RPBS medicine is the same as a PBS-listed medicine. There is no medicine listed only for veterans that is subject to the Safety Net early supply rule.

### **Does the Safety Net early supply rule apply to hospital prescriptions?**

No. Early supply rules do not apply to prescriptions relating to treatment at a hospital,

PBS medicines prescribed in private hospitals, discharge prescriptions for PBS medicines from public hospitals, and outpatient medications at public hospitals.

### **For more information about the PBS and PBS Safety Net:**

Call the PBS Information Line – Free call 1800 020 613

Pick up a PBS brochure from your pharmacy or Medicare office

Email enquiries to: [pbs@health.gov.au](mailto:pbs@health.gov.au)