

PBS Safety Net early supply rule Pharmacist Questions and Answers

What is the effect of the PBS Safety Net early supply rule?

The Safety Net early supply rule expands the former Safety Net 20 day rule so that early supply provisions apply for a wider range of medicines. For specified PBS medicines, a prescription that is supplied within less than the specified interval after a previous supply of any brand of the same or an equivalent medicine will fall outside the Safety Net. For that supply:

- the patient contribution will not count towards the Safety Net threshold
- the PBS co-payment cannot be discounted by the pharmacist
- if the Safety Net threshold has been reached, the usual patient payment applies - not the reduced Safety Net amount.

Why is the Safety Net early supply rule needed?

Safety Net entitlements can act as an incentive for repeat prescriptions to be obtained earlier than they are needed. Early supply rules encourage responsible use of the PBS by removing Safety Net benefits for additional or early supplies of some medicines. Early supply rules support Quality Use of PBS Medicines by discouraging stockpiling, reducing wastage and reducing the quantity of unused medicines in the community. Patients achieve the best value for PBS contributions in the long run by complying with entitlements. Proper use of entitlements also results in better use of PBS funding.

Which PBS items 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 that can be supplied at each dispensing means that early resupply should not be required. The resupply interval is specified individually for each medicine according to the use of the medicine and the listed quantity. Medicines specified for early supply include a wide range of therapeutic categories, but do not include medicines for supply under special programmes or listed for palliative care use.

The Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee provides advice regarding the application of early supply rules. More information on which medicines are specified 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 only applies where the product is the same or equivalent to a PBS item (any brand) supplied previously for the same person within the specified interval.

How will consumers know whether a medicine is subject to the Safety Net early supply rule?

If the need arises for an additional or early repeat supply of a medicine, consumers can be informed of any Safety Net implications by the pharmacist. This can occur as part of the usual process for determining whether 'immediate supply' conditions are met.

For medicines subject to early supply rules, repeat prescription forms include the first dispensing date when Safety Net benefits would apply. That is, the first date after the early supply period has elapsed.

Consumers can use the [Safety Net early supply rule - List of medicines](#) link on the PBS Website to check whether early supply rules apply for a particular medicine or brand.

Are there changes to the 'immediate supply' 20 day and 4 day rules?

There is no change to the circumstances where 'immediate supply' is permitted, that is, where the medicine is destroyed, lost or stolen, or having regard to the person's circumstances is necessary without delay for the treatment of the person.

Where an early supply period is specified for a medicine, the same period also applies for 'immediate supply'. This means that for some medicines listed with less than five repeats, the default four day period no longer applies for 'immediate supply' and the early supply period applies instead.

Where no early supply period is specified, the 'immediate supply' period is based on the number of repeats in the PBS listing: 20 days for items (other than eye preparations) listed with more than four repeats and 4 days for eye preparations and items listed with up to four repeats.

How does the Safety Net early supply rule fit with 'immediate supply'?

The Safety Net early supply rule applies in addition to 'immediate supply' provisions and, in practice, sequentially. The pharmacist still needs to ensure that 'immediate supply' requirements are satisfied before providing an early supply, including endorsing the prescription 'immediate supply necessary'. The electronic record is also endorsed to this effect. Data submitted to the Commonwealth for claimable and under co-payment prescriptions must indicate those prescriptions which are early supplies and/or 'immediate supplies'.

The implications for Safety Net when an early supply is required can be incorporated into the usual practices for dispensing involving 'immediate supply'.

What about effects for people with chronic illness or using higher dosages?

People who use a large number of medicines or are prescribed higher dosages should not usually need to have additional or early prescriptions dispensed. There is sufficient flexibility between the early supply period and the quantity dispensed to allow prescriptions for different medicines to be dispensed in sync or at convenient intervals in most cases. Additional supplies may be required where an increase in dosage occurs after a medicine is prescribed, the patient takes more than the prescribed dose, or the quantity prescribed is inadequate for the dosage. Prescribers should use an increased quantity authority when a larger quantity of a medicine is required to meet a patient's dosage needs so dispensing can occur at the usual interval.

Is supply under Regulation 24 affected?

No. Early supply rules do not apply to multiple repeats of a prescription dispensed at the one time under Regulation 24, unless that supply is itself within the specified interval for the medicine. Regulation 24 provisions for prescribers are unchanged.

Does the Safety Net early supply rule apply to RPBS supplies?

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

Does the Safety Net early supply rule apply for 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.

Pharmacy processing and hints:

- Pharmacy software provides prompts and dialog boxes for 'immediate supply' and Safety Net early supply processing which automatically adjust the amount for the Safety Net, PRF sticker, patient charge, PBS payment category for claiming, and pharmacy receipt.
- Where the payment category changes as a result of early supply, the prescription serial number corresponds to the payment category as supplied, not the patient entitlement. Data for early supply prescriptions are submitted according to payment category as supplied.
- For prescriptions with multiple PBS items, where the early supply rule outcome would result in different payment categories for different items, dispensing as 'deferred supply' should be used if necessary to allow correct categorising of all items for archiving.

For more information: PBS Information Line - Free call 1800 020 613
Department of Human Services Information Line – 132 290 Email enquiries to: pbs@health.gov.au