

Revised PBS listings for Antibiotic use

Commencing 1 April 2020, the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) listings for antibiotics will change.

In August 2019, the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee (PBAC) reviewed antibiotic listings on the PBS. Consequently, the PBAC recommended changes to individual listings to restrict maximum prescribed quantity and remove access to repeats where extended access would be clinically inappropriate. These recommendations are consistent with the Australian Government's broader ongoing strategy to reduce the risk of antibiotic resistance by optimising antibiotic use, particularly in the community setting.

What does this change involve?

The PBAC has recommended amending the maximum quantity and repeats for the top five most commonly prescribed PBS-listed antibiotic medications: amoxicillin, amoxicillin with clavulanic acid, cefalexin, doxycycline and roxithromycin.

Maximum quantities of antibiotics will be amended to reflect a full course of antibiotic treatment to be dispensed in one prescription for specific indications. Short courses of antibiotics will continue to be available with nil repeats.

These changes are intended to encourage clinicians to prescribe antibiotic repeats only when clinically indicated, thus reducing inappropriate prescribing and increasing quality use of antibiotic medicines.

What does this change mean for prescribers?

The maximum quantity and number of repeats for the PBS listings for amoxicillin, amoxicillin with clavulanic acid, cefalexin, doxycycline and roxithromycin have changed. Patients MUST meet the restriction criteria for the PBS listing and prescribers must prescribe quantities and repeats of antibiotics in line with current therapeutic guidelines.

For the new Authority Required (STREAMLINED) antibiotic listings with repeats, prescribers are required to include a valid 'streamlined authority code' on the authority prescription. The 'streamlined authority code' is located on the relevant PBS listing on the PBS website.

If you are uncertain about the appropriate streamlined code to use, visit the PBS website for more information. Some items have a limit on quantity and repeats that may be prescribed, which cannot be increased. Services Australia does not have delegation to administer outside the listed quantity and repeats in these instances. See the PBS website: www.pbs.gov.au for more information.

For more information about the prescribing, dispensing or claiming of PBS drugs, please call Services Australia on 132 290 or visit the Services Australia or PBS websites: www.servicesaustralia.gov.au or www.pbs.gov.au.

General questions about the PBS should be directed to the PBS general enquiry line on 1800 020 613 or email to pbs@health.gov.au.

What does this change mean for pharmacists?

Pharmacists must be aware that the maximum quantity and number of repeats of PBS listings for amoxicillin, amoxicillin with clavulanic acid, cefalexin, doxycycline and roxithromycin have changed.

For the new Authority Required (STREAMLINED) antibiotic listings with repeats, a 'streamlined authority code' must be included on the authority prescription from 1 April 2020. Pharmacists are required to ensure that any dispensed scripts have a valid streamlined authority code, which needs to be valid at the date of prescribing. Further, pharmacists should refer to warnings and payment rejections from Services Australia while dispensing antibiotic prescriptions in these circumstances.

For more information about the dispensing or claiming of PBS drugs, please call Services Australia on 132 290 or visit the Services Australia or PBS websites: www.servicesaustralia.gov.au or www.pbs.gov.au.