



## Patients in methadone or buprenorphine programs

### Information on changes from 1 July 2023

- From 1 July 2023, if you are in a methadone or buprenorphine program you will pay for your medicines the same way as other Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) medicines from your pharmacy on prescription from your prescriber.
- This includes methadone and buprenorphine brands Suboxone®, Subutex®, Buvidal® and Sublocade®.
- The aim of this change is to make these medicines more affordable for people across Australia.
- The main change is community pharmacies will not charge you daily fees for your dose.
- Instead, you will pay the PBS co-payment for a month of your medicine which will count towards your PBS Safety Net.
- From now, you can keep going to your usual pharmacy or clinic to get your methadone or buprenorphine dose.
- The priority is to make sure your care stays the same and you can access PBS co-payment support to remove daily dosing fees. No patient will be without their medicine.

### What will you pay for your methadone or buprenorphine through the PBS?

From 1 July 2023, the community pharmacy will no longer charge you daily dosing fees. Instead, the pharmacist will charge you a PBS co-payment once a month for your methadone or buprenorphine prescription. The PBS co-payment that you will pay is up to \$30 for general patients or \$7.30 if you have a concession card.

For most people, the PBS co-payment fee will cover 28 days' supply of your medicine that the pharmacist will continue to provide to you as a supervised dose or as a takeaway dose as instructed by your prescriber (doctor or nurse practitioner).

If you are taking 2 different strengths of buprenorphine (Suboxone® or Subutex®), you will need to pay one PBS co-payment for each strength of the prescribed medicines. For example, if your doctor prescribes you both the 2mg and 8mg for your dose, you will pay one co-payment for each. However, each prescription will count towards your PBS Safety Net record and if you usually reach the Safety Net, you will reach it sooner.

### Will methadone and buprenorphine prescriptions count towards my PBS Safety Net?

Yes. The amount you pay for methadone and buprenorphine prescriptions for the treatment of opioid dependence will count towards your PBS Safety Net just like other medicines on the PBS. Once you or your family spend a certain amount on PBS medicines, you'll reach the PBS Safety Net threshold. The PBS Safety Net helps you pay less for medicines after you've reached a certain amount in a calendar year.

From 1 January 2023, the PBS Safety Net thresholds are \$262.80 for concession card holders and \$1,563.50 for general patients.

Once you reach the threshold, your medicine will then either be free for concession card holders or cost up to \$7.30 for general patients.

Please talk to your pharmacist about recording the supply of your methadone or buprenorphine on your prescription (Safety Net) record form. Further information on the PBS Safety Net thresholds is available from [Services Australia](#).

### **Who is eligible to receive benefits under the PBS?**

If you are an Australian resident and you hold a current Medicare card, then you are eligible to receive benefits under the PBS. If you do not have a Medicare card you can learn how to get, use and replace your card by contacting Services Australia. More information is available at this link: [www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/medicare-card](http://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/medicare-card)

If you require assistance with getting a Medicare card, we also encourage you to speak to your doctor, pharmacist, peer or support worker.

### **Will I need to get a new prescription on 1 July 2023?**

You will not need to get a PBS prescription for your methadone or buprenorphine immediately on 1 July 2023. Your pharmacy will continue to use your existing prescription while it remains valid to dispense your medicine under the PBS and provide you with your doses. Both paper-based and electronic prescriptions can continue to be used.

This will support you to keep getting your doses without any breaks.

Before your current prescription expires or when you are next due for review with your prescriber, your doctor will write your next prescription as a PBS prescription.

While every effort has been made to use your existing prescription until its valid end date, you may need a new PBS prescription sooner than your current review date. Please talk to your pharmacist about the time remaining on your existing prescription.

### **Will I be able to get my dose from my pharmacy or clinic on 1 July 2023?**

Yes. For most people who get their methadone or buprenorphine from a pharmacy or their buprenorphine injection from their GP clinic, this will not change. The priority is to make sure you can continue to get your treatment and access PBS co-payment and Safety-Net support to remove daily dosing costs. Your state and territory methadone or buprenorphine program will continue to make sure you can access your medicine.

While a community pharmacy will only charge you a PBS co-payment, if you receive doses at a private clinic, the clinic may continue to charge you a daily dosing fee.

The Department of Health and Aged Care understands you may have more questions and further information is coming. You are encouraged to speak to your pharmacist, prescriber or relevant state and territory program about these changes.

Information is also available from peer-lead organisations: [Australian Injecting and Illicit Drug Users League](#) and [Harm Reduction Australia](#).