

# Palliative Care Drug Program

## Information for Patients and Health Care Providers

### The Purpose

To ensure that the cost of certain end-of-life medications do not create a financial barrier for care at home. Many existing drug coverage programs cover medications to help manage symptoms associated with palliative and end-of-life care. This program is for situations where additional coverage is required for home-based end-of-life care.

### Eligibility

Eligibility is assessed by a local specialist palliative care team.

Patients must meet the following eligibility criteria:

- Live in Nova Scotia
- Have a valid Nova Scotia Health Card number
- Be assessed by a palliative care team to be in the end stage of a terminal illness and anticipated to be in the last 6 months of life
- Wish to receive end-of-life care at home for as long as possible, whether in their own home, with family or friends, or in a supportive living residence

### Program benefits

The program covers the cost of drugs needed to manage symptoms associated with end-of-life-care beyond the patient's regular coverage. The list of drugs is based on the pan-Canadian Gold Standards for Palliative Care.

### Enrolment

If eligible, the patient's local palliative care team completes an authorization form and sends it to the Pharmacare office. Coverage is effective for 6 months from the enrolment date.

If a patient does not meet eligibility criteria, other Pharmacare programs should be considered, as appropriate.

### Cost

There is no cost to the patient for medications approved under the program.

### When does coverage begin?

Drug coverage begins on the date that the application is signed. It may take 2–3 business days for Pharmacare to process the application. To ensure coverage is applied, patients should notify the pharmacy when prescriptions are being filled.

### Other coverage

If the patient has another form of drug coverage, such as Pharmacare, private insurance, NIHB, or DVA, they should retain it. These may give patients access to additional benefits they may need.

Pharmacies must bill private insurance, NIHB, or DVA before submitting a claim to the Palliative Care Drug Program.

### Contact

For questions about this program, please talk to your palliative care team. For more information, you may visit the following website: <http://novascotia.ca/dhw/pharmacare/palliative-drug-program.asp>