

Antinausea Medications - PharmaCare Funding

Q: Antinausea medications are not on the BC Cancer Benefit Drug List. Are they covered by BC Cancer?

Antinausea (antiemetic) medications are NOT covered by BC Cancer because they are supportive care medications, and not used for the *active* treatment of cancer (see [BC Cancer SCNAUSEA protocol](#)).

Coverage for medications used for the prevention and/or treatment of nausea and vomiting associated with cancer drug therapy is available through BC PharmaCare benefit plans and [Special Authority \(SA\)](#) requests. Some medications, such as prochlorperazine, metoclopramide, and dexamethasone, are regular PharmaCare benefit drugs.

The following steps will optimize the patient coverage of prescriptions written for antinausea medications:

1) Patient is registered with Fair PharmaCare

The [Fair PharmaCare plan](#) web page provides information which includes: registering online, ensuring eligibility (MSP coverage is required), checking enrollment, updating income and requesting the monthly deductible payment option.

Note: the Fair PharmaCare deductible is based on income from **two years prior**, not medication cost, and is assessed annually. If family income has dropped by 10% or more during the past two years, patients can request an income review to have their deductible lowered. This option is particularly important when new, high cost medications are prescribed prior to the next income review date.

Another option to help alleviate immediate costs is the monthly deductible payment option for those patients who do not have private health insurance with a drug benefit plan. The [Get help paying your Fair PharmaCare deductible](#) web page outlines how to apply for both of these services.

For more information on a patient's deductible, Health Insurance BC can be contacted at 1-800-663-7100 or 604-683-7151.

2) Antinausea medication is on Special Authority (SA) list

[For example: netupitant-palonosetron (Akynzeo®), aprepitant (Emend®), ondansetron, olanzapine]

PharmaCare requires the patient's prescriber to submit a Special Authority request in order for the patient to be eligible for coverage of certain medications. Medications that are regular PharmaCare benefits are not included on the Special Authority list. **Note: if the prescriber is exempt (see below) then a Special Authority request is not required.**

See [Special Authority \(SA\)](#) for links to the SA Drug List and Criteria, SA Electronic Forms and SA Request Information. If a SA form is faxed, the approval, denial or request for more information is returned to the same fax number. Electronic SA forms (eForms) are also available and their use is encouraged. There are many benefits to electronic form submissions including shorter approval time, confirmation that request has been received and patient access to requests through Health Gateway. Pharmacists are able to request SA Coverage electronically when working in a clinical setting in collaboration with a prescriber. BC Cancer staff can email eFormsEnrolment@phsa.ca for authorization to access the [eForms](#).

Note: since the olanzapine SA eForms application does not specify an indication for nausea and vomiting, check "other" option and provide a detailed explanation in the "additional comments" section to ensure approval of PharmaCare benefits.

3) Prescriber Exemptions and Collaborative Prescribing Agreement (CPA) for specific medications are complete

Each SA medication page has a section titled **Practitioner Exemptions**, specifying whether a practitioner exemption or CPA is available.

Prescriber exemptions

If an exemption is available and the prescriber is in the exempted group, no SA submission is required. For example, oncologists are exempt from completing a SA form for ondansetron.

Collaborative Prescribing Agreement (CPA)

If a CPA is available, the eligible prescriber can sign an agreement and be exempt from submitting SA requests when prescribing the specific medication according to

the terms of the CPA. Netupitant-palonosetron (Akynzeo®) and aprepitant (Emend®) are examples of SA medications that have a CPA available.

BC Cancer-designated oncology specialists, such as General Practitioners in Oncology (GPOs) and Nurse Practitioners (NPs), can arrange for the same exemption as oncologists by notifying their respective Professional Colleges of their oncology designation.

4) Level of coverage is understood

The patient will pay 100% of the cost of the prescription until they reach their family deductible as set by Fair PharmaCare, based on family income. After reaching the deductible, PharmaCare will pay for 70% of the costs (75% for certain age groups) until the family maximum has been reached, and then 100% of costs thereafter.

The number for the Health Insurance of BC Pharmacy and Doctor PharmaCare/PharmaNet Help Desk is 1-800-554-0225.

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References:

1. Government of British Columbia [Internet]. Victoria BC: Government of British Columbia; 2022. Special Authority; [updated 2023 Jan 11;cited 2023 Jan 17]; Available from: <https://alpha.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/practitioner-professional-resources/pharmacare/prescribers/special-authority>
2. Government of British Columbia [Internet]. Victoria BC: Government of British Columbia; 2022. Fair PharmaCare Plan; [updated 2022 Dec 21;cited 2023 Jan 11]. Available from: <https://alpha.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/health-drug-coverage/pharmacare-for-bc-residents/who-we-cover/fair-pharmacare-plan?keyword=fair&keyword=pharmacare>