



client NOTIFICATION

January 2016

Dispensing Fee Frequency Limits on Maintenance Medications

Applies to RWAM groups with drug card adjudication provided by either Green Shield Canada or Express Scripts Canada.

Effective February 1, 2016*, a limit of five prescription fills per year will be implemented for a defined list of maintenance drugs. If a pharmacist attempts to submit a drug claim for less than a three-month supply of a maintenance drug, the claim will be denied and the pharmacist will receive a message advising them that the days' supply submitted is below the minimum allowed.

Since maintenance drugs are used to control and manage a variety of chronic illnesses, including diabetes and hypertension, once a patient's condition is stabilized, these medications are most commonly prescribed for a three-month supply with multiple refills. A recent analysis of RWAM data has revealed a growing trend towards monthly dispensing of these maintenance medications. This practice can lead to patient inconvenience, reduced overall adherence to medication therapy, increased dispensing fees paid by plans and patients and overall increased drug plan costs.

The expectation is that most pharmacists will adjust their practices upon receiving the electronic message. Pharmacies are already accustomed to this type of policy associated with plans in the provincial and private sectors.

** Green Shield's changes will be effective Feb 1st and Express Scripts' will follow shortly thereafter.*

Please contact your Advisor if you have any questions.

Dispensing Fee Frequency Limits on Maintenance Medication

Frequently Asked Questions

1. How does the program work?

The program limits the number of dispensing fees allowed and paid for by the plan to five (5) per year for a defined list of maintenance or long term use medications. If a pharmacist attempts to submit a drug claim for less than a three-month supply of a maintenance drug, the claim will be denied and the pharmacist will receive a message advising them that the days' supply submitted is below the minimum allowed.

If you are taking a maintenance medication included in the program, every time you have it filled, the dispensing fee will count towards the limit.

2. When does the program take effect?

The program became effective February 1st, 2016.

3. Who does the program apply to?

The program applies to all RWAM groups, in all provinces (except Quebec where unique pharmacy practices apply) with a pay direct drug card with either Green Shield Canada or Express Scripts Canada.

4. What drugs or drug classes are included in the program?

The program is focused on drugs prescribed to treat chronic medical conditions, including, but not limited to high cholesterol, high blood pressure, ulcers, acid reflux as well as other drugs taken regularly on a long-term basis, such as oral contraceptives. Other examples of conditions treated by maintenance medications include diabetes, osteoporosis, cardiac conditions (angina, congestive heart failure), hypothyroidism, and gout.

5. Are there any exceptions?

Many drugs are considered "maintenance" drugs, but need to be dispensed more frequently, including biologics and specialty drugs and products where there is potential risk of abuse or misuse; for example, narcotics and controlled drugs. Other drugs that treat chronic conditions but would not reasonably be dispensed in large quantities (i.e. antipsychotic agents) will also be exempted from the program.

Also if you are prescribed a new maintenance medication, a smaller day supply ie. 30 day supply, will be permitted to allow your pharmacist to properly assess your tolerance to a new medication. Once stabilized on the new medication, the policy would be applied.

If a medication requires more frequent dispensing, your pharmacist can request an exception to the program through your Pharmacy Benefit Manager (PBM).

**For any additional questions, please contact your RWAM Group Administrator at:
1-877-888-7926 (rwam).**