

Improving the value of how pharmacies are paid for services to Long-Term Care Homes: Key Facts for Patients and Families

What is changing?

Starting on January 1, 2020, the province will be changing the way in which pharmacies that provide professional services to long-term care homes are paid. At the same time, the co-payments for all Ontario Drug Benefit (ODB) prescriptions for patients living in long-term care homes will be eliminated.

In the 2019 Budget, the government announced that it would be enhancing the quality and efficiency of Ontario's public health care system. This included consideration of changes to pharmacy payments, including fees paid for filling prescriptions for long-term care home residents.

The continued growth in costs to the publicly funded drug programs puts pressure on the sustainability of these programs and the ability to continue providing eligible Ontarians with the drugs they need. Ontario spends significantly more in dispensing fees for pharmacy services provided to long-term care homes than other jurisdictions in Canada. A more modern pharmacy reimbursement model is needed.

Under the new reimbursement model, pharmacies will be paid a standard fee for providing professional pharmacy services based on the number of beds in the home that they serve. This is to replace the current system where a separate fee is paid for each ODB-funded prescription or refill dispensed and each ODB-funded professional service provided by the pharmacy. Resources will be focused on strengthening and establishing a solid medication management system in long-term care homes through the work of skilled professionals like pharmacists and pharmacy technicians.

What does this mean for residents and their families?

This is a change to how pharmacies are paid and will not affect residents' access to medications. There will actually be a reduction in costs for long-term care home residents. For long-term care home recipients, who often have a fixed income, the changes will eliminate the current \$2 co-payment per eligible prescription, which provides savings of approximately \$150 per resident per year.

Will my family member still receive the same care at the home?

This new funding model will allow pharmacy service providers to focus on improving patient care such as by helping to reduce the use of unnecessary medications that may have serious adverse effects, such as those associated with an increased risk of falls.

Pharmacy service providers are still required to provide all the same services as before including participation in developing medication assessments and maintaining drug profiles, checking for drug interactions and ensuring that drug therapy is appropriate for patients. They will also continue to evaluate the medication management systems at the home and provide education and support regarding drugs to long-term care home staff.

For more information:

2019 Ontario Budget:

<http://budget.ontario.ca/2019/contents.html>

Coverage under the Ontario Drug Benefit program:

Visit <https://www.ontario.ca/page/get-coverage-prescription-drugs#ltc>

Long-term care homes:

Visit <https://www.ontario.ca/page/about-long-term-care>