



Pharmaceutical
Society of Australia



Help with Medicine Costs

(PBS Safety Net)

The Australian Government's PBS (Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme) Safety Net helps to limit the cost of medicines for individuals and families who use a large number of PBS medicines in one calendar year. Your pharmacist can help you to keep a record of your PBS medicine costs each year.

Many medicines are very expensive, often costing hundreds or sometimes thousands of dollars per month or course of treatment. The Australian Government controls and subsidises the cost of a wide range of medicines through the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS). This ensures that Australian residents can more easily afford to buy the medicines they need. The PBS Safety Net provides an additional subsidy for PBS medicines if you spend a certain amount on PBS medicines in one calendar year.

The PBS Safety Net

- Each year the government sets the PBS Safety Net threshold – this is the amount that you and your family need to spend on PBS medicines, in that calendar year, in order to qualify for the PBS Safety Net.
- The government sets two thresholds – one for people who have a concession card issued by Centrelink or Veterans' Affairs, and one for people who do not have a concession card (general patients).

- A pharmacist can tell you what your threshold is.
- Once you reach your Safety Net threshold, you can apply for a PBS Safety Net card, which entitles you and your family members to a reduction in the cost of PBS medicines for the remainder of that calendar year.
- Some brands and types of medicines have an additional surcharge attached to them which does not count toward the Safety Net threshold. To avoid paying this extra surcharge, you can ask your doctor to prescribe a less expensive brand or type of medicine if one is available. Your pharmacist may also be able to help by substituting a less expensive brand of your medicine at your request.

How it works

- To qualify for the PBS Safety Net, you must keep a record of the PBS medicines supplied to you and your family.

Important

- Do not use another person's medicine or give your medicine to another person.
- Read ALL medicine labels and follow directions carefully.
- Never stock up on medicines – only fill a prescription repeat when you need more of your medicine.
- Learn about your medicines – ask your pharmacist or doctor.
- Review your medicines with your doctor

and pharmacist regularly. Tell your doctor and pharmacist about all the medicines you are using, including natural and herbal medicines.

- It is illegal to take or send PBS medicines overseas that are not for your personal use or the use of someone travelling with you. A doctor's prescription or letter confirming your medicines may be adequate for passing through Customs, but some countries may require a letter from the Australian Government.

- If you always go to the same pharmacy, all of your PBS costs can be recorded by the pharmacy, but if you use more than one pharmacy, you need to keep your own record.
- If you are keeping your own record, you need to use a 'Prescription Record Form' (PRF), which you can get from any pharmacy.
- Every time you have a PBS prescription filled for yourself or a family member, hand your Medicare card and Prescription Record Form to the pharmacist so that the prescription and its cost can be recorded.
- PBS medicines may be supplied through community or hospital pharmacies.
- When you are close to reaching the safety net threshold, ask your pharmacist how to apply for a PBS Safety Net Card.
- Once you reach the PBS Safety Net threshold, your pharmacist can issue your Safety Net Card.
- Your pharmacist will need to see your Prescription Record Form, Medicare card and concession card before issuing a Safety Net Card.

What price is recorded?

The medicine price recorded for Safety Net purposes is the price of the cheapest brand and may be less than the price you pay for the brand you use. If you choose to use a more expensive brand of your medicine, the additional surcharge for that brand does not count towards your PBS Safety Net threshold

Who can you include in your family?

For the purposes of the Safety Net Scheme, your family includes:

- Your spouse or de facto spouse
- Family members under the age of 16 who are under your care and responsibility
- Dependent full time students under the age of 25.

Your **Self Care** Pharmacist

Non-PBS prescriptions

Your doctor might give you a prescription for a medicine that isn't available on the PBS, or isn't available on the PBS for your condition – sometimes called a 'private prescription'. Your doctor will indicate this on your prescription and you will need to pay the full price for the medicine at the pharmacy. The cost of these prescriptions does not count towards your PBS Safety Net.

Safety Net 20 day rule

If you buy a PBS medicine less than 20 days after a previous supply of the same medicine, the cost may not count towards your PBS Safety Net threshold. If you have already reached the Safety Net you may have to pay your pre-Safety Net price.

Related fact cards

- *Generic Medicines*
- *The PBS and You* (website only – ask your pharmacist)
- *Travel Health*
- *Wise Use of Medicines* (website only – ask your pharmacist)

For more information

Medicare Australia – website
www.medicareaustralia.gov.au

Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme – PBS Information Line phone 1800 020 613 or website
www.health.gov.au/pbs

Consumer Medicine Information (CMI) leaflets – your pharmacist can advise on availability.

NPS Medicines Line – phone 1300 888 763 Monday to Friday, 9am to 6pm EST.

The Poisons Information Centre – in case of poisoning phone 131 126 from anywhere in Australia.

Pharmacists are medicines experts. Ask a pharmacist for advice when choosing a medicine.

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