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Department of Health & Wellness



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**To: All Pharmacists, Nurse Practitioners, and Physicians**

**From: DHW Pharmaceutical Services and the Chief Public Health Office**

**Date: May 21, 2024**

**Subject: Changes to Eligibility Criteria for Paxlovid™ Cost Assistance**

**CC: 811, HPEI ELT, DHW SLT**

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Paxlovid™ (nirmatrelvir-ritonavir), an oral antiviral medication to treat mild-to-moderate COVID-19, was approved for adults aged 18 and older by Health Canada in January 2022 and has been available at no cost through a federal stockpile to provinces and territories since approval. As of May 2024, the federal stockpile is ending. **Going forward, Paxlovid™ will be supplied through standard procurement practices for medications for public programming.**

In 2024, most people have been vaccinated or have already had COVID-19. In comparison to the early part of the pandemic, the chances of being hospitalized or dying from COVID-19 are now very low for the general population. In April 2024, CADTH's Canadian Drug Expert Committee (CDEC) released an analysis and [cost reimbursement recommendation](#) for Paxlovid™. **Based on recent cost-effectiveness analysis, CADTH now recommends that only those individuals who are severely or moderately immunocompromised should receive cost assistance for Paxlovid™.** This recommendation is informed by recent clinical trials and observational studies in conjunction with the estimated list price of one treatment of Paxlovid (~\$1300 CAD).

### **Severe to Moderate Immunosuppression**

Conditions resulting in **severe** immunosuppression include:

- Solid organ transplant recipients
- Treatment for malignant hematologic condition
- Bone marrow, stem cell transplant or transplant-related immunosuppressant use
- Receipt of anti-CD20 agents or B-cell depleting agents (such as rituximab) in the previous 2 years
- Severe primary immunodeficiencies

Conditions resulting in **moderate** immunosuppression include:

- Treatment for cancer including solid tumors
- Significantly immunosuppressing drugs (e.g., biologic in the last three months, oral immune suppressing medication in the last months, oral steroid [20mg/day of prednisone equivalent taken on an ongoing basis] in the last month, or immune-suppressing infusion or injection in the last three months)
- Advanced HIV infection (treated or untreated)
- Moderate primary immunodeficiencies
- Renal conditions (i.e., hemodialysis, peritoneal dialysis, glomerulonephritis and dispensing of a steroid)

Patients who are considering this medication if they test positive for COVID-19 are recommended to call ahead to discuss whether they would be eligible for drug assistance coverage for Paxlovid™. There are currently some differences across Canadian jurisdictions about who is eligible for drug assistance coverage. Physicians who prescribe Paxlovid for any of their patients who they think may benefit are **not** required to submit a Special Authorization form when prescribing Paxlovid™.

### **Cost Assistance Options**

As of May 27, 2024, patients in PEI who are moderately to severely immunocompromised who have been prescribed Paxlovid™ may be eligible for cost assistance under one of PEI's publicly funded [Drug Programs](#) listed below. Usual copays or deductibles for eligible program participants will apply.

[Catastrophic Drug Program](#)

[Family Health Benefit Drug Program](#)

[Financial Assistance Drug Program](#)

[Nursing Home Drug Program](#)

[Seniors' Drug Program](#)

Some private insurance companies may offset the cost of Paxlovid™ for those who are eligible.

(PEI relies on the expert informed recommendations from the Canadian Agency for Drugs and Technologies in Health (CADTH) and the collective price negotiation of the pan Canadian Pharmaceutical Alliance (pCPA) for medications. The recommendations help inform the listing of medications under Public Drug Programs for eligible clients.)

### **More Information About Paxlovid**

[PEI: Paxlovid \(antiviral for treating COVID-19\)](#)

[Health Canada: Market Authorization of Paxlovid](#)

[CADTH: Paxlovid Reimbursement Recommendation](#)

[University of British Columbia: How Useful is Paxlovid in 2024?](#)

***Thank you for all of the excellent care and efforts to support Islanders.***