

# Consumer Information Pack

## Community Pharmacist Pilot

**OFFICIAL**

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## General information

### What is the Community Pharmacist Pilot?

The Community Pharmacist Pilot (the pilot) allows people to have some healthcare treatment in a local pharmacy instead of going to a doctor. As part of the pilot the Department of Health will determine if this is a useful way for people to get treatment more quickly or closer to home for some common medical conditions.

The pilot started in late October 2023 and is running until October 2024. During this time, you will be able to attend a participating pharmacy for treatment of some common health conditions listed below.

### What health conditions are included?

The pilot will initially include three types of health treatments:

1. Women will be able to get more supply of a contraceptive pill they are already using without needing a prescription
2. Women with uncomplicated urinary tract infections will be able to access antibiotics for treatment
3. Pharmacists can provide some travel health advice and vaccinations and other public health vaccines.

### How will the pilot help me?

Victorians will have more choice about where and how they access healthcare. People will be able to see a pharmacist for some conditions and access medications if required, without needing to see a doctor to get a prescription first.

The pilot may benefit women in particular, and people living in areas where it is hard to get an appointment with a doctor.

## Finding pilot services

### Will my local pharmacy be providing services?

While the pilot is available to all pharmacies throughout Victoria, individual pharmacies will choose whether they participate and what services they offer.

Pharmacists, pharmacy owners and pharmacy premises will need to meet strict requirements to be able to participate in the pilot.

## Am I eligible to receive care?

Not everybody can be treated as part of the pilot. The pharmacist will ask you questions before and during your consultation to help them decide if they can treat you.

Your age, your sex and the details of your condition and medical history may help the pharmacist determine whether they can treat you or whether you need a referral. A referral is usually a letter to another healthcare provider to ask them to see you. The pharmacist will refer you to your doctor or another healthcare provider if they think that is the best option for you.

People with or without a Medicare card and international students will be eligible to seek a service under the pilot.

## How do I find the services I need?

There are many ways to find the services you need. You can ask at your local pharmacy or see if they have posters or other signage about the pilot displayed. Their webpage may give you information about the pilot services and you could email or ring them to check what is offered.

The Better Health Channel website has information about the services in the pilot and a map to help you find what you need. You will be able to search the map for the suburb or postcode where you are seeking a service. You will also be able to search by the type of service you need.

## Will I need to make a booking?

Each pharmacy will decide how best to offer pilot services. Some pharmacies may require a booking for a consultation. Others may allow walk in consultations or a combination of both. Some may offer services only at a certain time or on some days.

The best approach is to contact the local pharmacy directly (or visit their website) to check:

- What services are being offered under the pilot; and
- If a booking is required or if you can visit without making a booking.

## What if I need services in a language other than English?

Some pharmacies will offer consultations in languages other than English. It is best to check the local signage in the pharmacy or ask them directly about the languages they can offer.

## What is an uncomplicated urinary tract infection?

A urinary tract infection is an infection of the urinary system. An uncomplicated urinary tract infection is generally in women, and people with female biology, who are generally healthy, who are not pregnant and who have no abnormalities or obstructions in their urinary tract. Uncomplicated infections are those in the lower section of the urinary tract (urethra and bladder).

If a pharmacist thinks the infection may be complicated, the patient will be referred to a doctor for treatment.

## Are there age limits for the services?

Yes, there are age limits for urinary tract infection treatment, resupply of the contraceptive pill and for receiving vaccines. These are:

- urinary tract infection treatment – women aged 18 to 65 years
- contraceptive pills – women aged 16 – 50 years
- vaccinations – please check with the pharmacist as the age can vary for different vaccines

## Costs to use the pilot services

### What will it cost me for a healthcare consultation?

There will be no charge to see the pharmacist to receive care for the two types of care included: urinary tract infections and resupply of the contraceptive pill.

If you need medicine, you will pay the same as you normally would. In other words, the price will be the same as if you had a prescription from your doctor.

### What will it cost me for vaccinations and travel health?

Pharmacies may charge the patient a consultation fee, plus the cost of any vaccines given for a travel health or other vaccination consultation. The cost of the patient consultation and the vaccines may vary between pharmacies.

The pharmacist will discuss all fees with the patient, before starting the consultation and before giving any vaccines.

### Will I be able to use my concession card?

All Australian residents who hold a current Medicare card are eligible to receive medicines supplied under the pilot at the same price as if they had a prescription, that is, the same as under the PBS. This includes concession card holders and those eligible for subsidised medicine under the Closing the Gap program.

Under the pilot, a valid Medicare card and valid concession cards must be shown on request to be charged the subsidised amount.

Patients who have exceeded their Safety Net threshold will have the same pricing for medications as if it were prescribed by a doctor. The prices will vary by medication but in some cases, there will be no fee for the medication in this situation.

### Will this contribute to my PBS SafetyNet threshold?

Costs of medicines supplied as part of the Pilot will **not** contribute to your PBS Safety Net Threshold.

If this is important to you, you may wish to see a doctor instead of continuing with the pharmacist consultation.

## Consultations with the pharmacist

### What do I need to bring?

Make sure you bring your Medicare card if you have one, and any concession cards you hold. It is also useful to have information about any medications you are taking for other purposes.

If you are seeking more boxes of the contraceptive pill, you will need to bring your old prescription, or some of the medication in its box. A pharmacy may have a record of this information if it is the pharmacy you use regularly.

## **What will happen during the consultation?**

The pharmacist will firstly take you into a private consultation room. They will explain about the pilot and ask for your consent to be part of the pilot and to have your information collected. There is more detailed information about the consent and use of information in the Patient consent to treatment and privacy information sheet. This will be shared with each patient at the start of a consultation.

They will then ask you about the health service you need and make a decision about your treatment. They will answer any questions you have and will make sure you have the information you need.

## **Will I see a pharmacist in a private room?**

Pharmacies need to have a private consultation room to provide these healthcare services. This means you will be able to speak about your healthcare needs in a private and quiet setting.

## **Will I get a follow up health check?**

Most people will get sent a follow up message by SMS or email a week later to check whether their symptoms have gone away, and they feel better, and to make sure there are no side effects from the medication or the vaccination.

This message will also remind people to see their doctor if they have concerns about their condition.

## **What do I do if I don't get better or have other health problems?**

If your condition stays the same or gets worse, or you are worried about the medications, side effects or you have other concerns you can see your usual general practitioner to discuss all these matters.

While the pharmacist will be able to help you with specific conditions during the pilot, it is your doctor who is still the best person for you to see about your overall health and any serious health conditions.

## Pilot evaluation and information

### How will my information be collected and how will it be used?

Part of the aim of the pilot is to understand whether these services are useful and provide a benefit to patients.

Your pharmacist will collect information about you and your consultation in the same way your doctor keeps a record of your visit when you see them. This information is kept safely in the computer systems used by the pharmacy and will be used by the Department of Health for monitoring the pilot. There is more detailed information about the consent and use of information in the Patient consent to treatment and privacy information sheet. This will be shared with each patient at the start of a consultation.

With your consent the information can be shared with your My Health Record and your regular doctor (if you have one). You can also get a printed letter with this information for you to take to the doctor yourself.

You can still receive treatment even if you do not consent to sharing your information with your My Health Record or your regular doctor.

### Will my information be used to help evaluate the pilot?

You will be asked to consent to sharing information with the Department of Health to allow them to monitor and evaluate the pilot. The department will not access your name or address information or anything else which would allow them to identify you.

You will also be asked to consent to have your contact number and email address shared with the department and companies used by the department to assist with the evaluation. If you do consent to this, you may be sent a survey to seek your feedback on the pilot and the services you received.

### How will my doctor be informed about my treatment?

The pharmacist can share some key information about your treatment with your doctor but only if you give permission for this. This will be a letter or email to your doctor.

### Can I give feedback for the evaluation?

If you give consent to be contacted as part of the evaluation you will be able to participate in short surveys and potentially interviews to give feedback on the pilot. You may be able to scan a QR code or access a survey soon after your consultation to give immediate feedback. You may also be contacted at another time to have the opportunity to give more input.

## More information

### How are pharmacists trained for these services?

Pharmacists already do extensive study in all aspects of medicines as part of their degrees.

Most pharmacists in Australia have successfully completed a four-year university degree, followed by a 1-year supervised internship. Once registered with the Pharmacy Board of Australia, pharmacists must continue to undertake professional development each year to maintain their knowledge and skills.

Pharmacists who are participating in the pilot must have successfully completed further training relating to the services they have chosen to provide. For example, training about the supply of medication for urinary tract infections or recommending the vaccinations you need for travel.

As part of the consultations, the pharmacists will use protocols which are like a map that guides the pharmacist in their decision-making process. They have been developed by the Department of Health in consultation with medical and pharmacy experts and are based on international best practice.

### What if I don't want to use the pilot services?

People can choose whether they want to be part of this pilot, or whether they prefer to access their usual healthcare services, such as their general practitioner, other doctors or other health professionals.

### How can I make a complaint?

Information on the complaints processes for patients is available at our [Feedback and complaints](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/feedback-and-complaints) page <[www.health.vic.gov.au/feedback-and-complaints](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/feedback-and-complaints)>.

If patients have a complaint, they can take the following steps to get the complaint resolved:

**Step 1.** Discuss your complaint with a staff member from the community pharmacy where you received the service.

**Step 2.** If the complaint cannot be resolved at Step 1, or the patient is dissatisfied with the outcome, they can choose one of the following ways to lodge a formal complaint with the department:

- Submit the complaint online via [our online form](https://feedback.dhhs.vic.gov.au/layout.html) <<https://feedback.dhhs.vic.gov.au/layout.html> - /DH>.
- Email our Feedback and complaints team via [health.feedback@health.vic.gov.au](mailto:health.feedback@health.vic.gov.au)
- Mail: Health Feedback, GPO Box 4057, Melbourne, Victoria, 3000.
- Phone: [1300 229 075](tel:1300229075). For more information, see our [Contact us](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/contact-us) <<https://www.health.vic.gov.au/contact-us>> page.

### Where can I find out more?

The Better Health Channel will have the most up to date information about the Community Pharmacist Pilot.



To receive this document in another format, email [cpp@health.vic.gov.au](mailto:cpp@health.vic.gov.au).

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Available at <<https://www.health.vic.gov.au/primary-care/victorian-community-pharmacist-statewide-pilot>> and <<https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au>>