

Revised hydroxychloroquine PBS listings for the treatment of autoimmune disorders and malaria

Commencing 1 May 2020, the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) listings for hydroxychloroquine will change.

To reflect the changes made by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) regarding the current scheduling of hydroxychloroquine, the Department of Health has adjusted the current PBS listing for 1 May 2020. This will assist to minimise the risk of PBS prescriptions being supplied to patients accessing hydroxychloroquine for unapproved indications, and ensure that patients who are regularly on this medication for the approved indications will be able to have continued access.

What do these changes involve?

As of 1 May 2020, the current general unrestricted benefits listing of hydroxychloroquine on the PBS is split into separate initial and continuing treatment listings for the TGA approved indications of malaria or autoimmune disorders. Both initial and continuing PBS listings will be Authority Required (STREAMLINED). Under the initial PBS listing, initial therapy must be authorised by a medical practitioner of any of the specialities defined in the clinical criteria.

What does this change mean for prescribers?

Prescribers must ensure that patients meet the relevant restriction criteria when prescribing hydroxychloroquine under the Authority Required (STREAMLINED) PBS listings. The 'streamlined authority code' is located on the relevant PBS listing on the PBS website.

When prescribing initial therapy of hydroxychloroquine under the initial PBS listing, the prescription must be authorised by a medical practitioner, recognised under State or Territory legislation that forms part of the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law, as a specialist in specialties of dermatology, intensive care medicine, paediatrics and child health, physician, or emergency medicine.

What does this change mean for pharmacists?

From 1 May 2020, hydroxychloroquine will become initial or continuing Authority Required (STREAMLINED) listings on the PBS for the treatment of malaria or autoimmune diseases. Pharmacists will therefore be required to ensure any relevant dispensed scripts have a valid streamlined authority code, which needs to be valid at the date of prescribing.