



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Seirbhís Aisíoca Príomhchúraim
Bealach amach 5 an M50
An Bóthar Thuaidh
Fionnghlas
Baile Átha Cliath 11

Health Service Executive
Primary Care Reimbursement Service
Exit 5, M50
North Road
Finglas
Dublin 11

Guthán: (01) 864 7100
Facs: (01) 834 3589

Tel: (01) 864 7100
Fax: (01) 834 3589

Circular No. 020/10

21st September 2010

Re: Prescriptions Charges for Medical Card Holders

Dear Pharmacist,

The Health (Amendment) (No 2) Act 2010 provides for the payment of a charge of 50 cent by persons with full eligibility (GMS patients) per item dispensed by Community Pharmacy Contractors. The implementation date for collection of these charges by Community Pharmacists is the 1st October 2010.

The Act provides that a person who is supplied by a Community Pharmacy Contractor with a drug, medicine or medical or surgical appliance on the prescription of a Registered Medical Practitioner, Registered Dentist or Registered Nurse Prescriber shall be charged 50 cent per item subject to a limit of €10 per family per month and this charge will be recouped from payment to the Pharmacist.

As above, the Act provides that the maximum amount payable by a person and his or her dependents in any month will be €10. It is intended that a spouse or a cohabiting partner, children under 16 and children aged over 16 and under 21 who are in fulltime education and wholly or mainly maintained by another adult person who has full eligibility will constitute a 'family' for the purposes of applying the charges.

Patients, who have their medicines changed on a weekly / daily basis, including palliative care patients, will be subject to the charge which is capped at €10 per family per month. However, for 'Phased Dispensing' the phased element of the dispensing, where such applies, does not attract a separate prescription charge. The Non Dispensing Fee will not attract a prescription charge.

Persons who are homeless and not in a residential centre and who have their own medical card will be required to pay the charges. In the case of persons who are homeless and who live in a residential setting the provider of the accommodation will be required to pay the charge on behalf of each resident and make the necessary arrangements for collection of the charge from the residents.

For persons who hold a medical card and are residing in Nursing Homes, either HSE or Private, or a Residential Disability Centre, the provider of the accommodation will be required to pay the charge on behalf of each resident and make the necessary arrangements for collection of the charge from the residents.

A prescription charge will also apply for clients accessing products -

- using Hospital Emergency Prescriptions
- using Dental Prescriptions under the Dental Treatment Scheme
- under the EEA Scheme
- under the discretionary psychiatric arrangements in the Eastern Region
- under the discretionary hardship arrangements
- under the Infectious Diseases Regulations (TB Drugs).

It is important to note that where a single prescribed item is required to be dispensed in different strengths and different containers e.g. Warfarin, and therefore claimed as more than one item, a prescription charge will apply to each claimed strength of the product.

There are a limited number of exemptions from prescription charges:

1. Children who are in the care of the Health Service Executive under the Child Care Acts 1991 to 2007. All other GMS clients will be subject to prescription charges.
2. The supply of Methadone to Opiate Dependent Clients. Methadone clients will be required to pay the charge on prescription items other than Methadone. The supply of Methadone for non opiate dependent clients is not exempted.
3. High Tech Products. As the supply of High Tech Medicines operates on the basis of a patient care fee, a prescription charge will not apply.

Carers responsible for children in care will pay the prescription charge to the pharmacy and claim a full refund from the HSE PCRS.

The charges do not apply to the Long Term Illness Scheme, the Drugs Payment Scheme, the High Tech Arrangements, or to Health Amendment Act (Hepatitis C) card holders.

Pharmacists may be requested to facilitate the avoidance of prescription charges. I wish to clarify that where a GMS eligible person has been prescribed a GMS Reimbursable Item, the prescription charge will apply. For Non GMS Reimbursable Items, the discretionary Hardship arrangements are available for which the prescription charge will also apply. As set out previously in Circular No 016/10, it is not appropriate to submit LTI claims for reimbursement where a patient holds a Medical Card.

Except in very special circumstances, no more than one month's requirements should be dispensed at a time.

I enclose a set of Frequently Asked Questions for your information.

Your cooperation in this matter is much appreciated.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Patrick Burke', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Patrick Burke
Primary Care Reimbursement Service.

Prescription Charges - Frequently Asked Questions

What are prescription charges?

From 1st October 2010, people with Medical Cards will pay a 50 cent charge for medicines and other items that they get on prescription from pharmacies. This follows a change in the law that was announced in the 2009 Budget.

How much is the prescription charge?

The prescription charge is 50 cent for each item that is dispensed to you under the Medical Card Scheme, up to a maximum of €10 per month, per person or family. Once your pharmacy can identify all of your family members then you should not pay more than €10 per month. The HSE will continue to pay the rest of the cost of your medicine.

What constitutes a 'Family' for the purpose of the €10 monthly maximum?

A family is you, your spouse / partner, any children under 16 years of age and any children between 16 and 21 years of age who are in full time education.

What if I or my family pays more than €10 in a month?

The HSE will issue refunds automatically on a quarterly basis, based on the information received from your pharmacy. However, you can avoid refunds altogether if you and your family visit a single pharmacy and your Pharmacist can identify all of your family members.

If you consider that you have not received the refund that was due to you, you can apply online, or on a refund claim form, to make a claim.

Claims can be made online at www.medicalcard.ie, or on a claim form, which you can download at www.medicalcard.ie, pick up at your Local Health Office or if you call us on 1890-252-919 we will send one out to you.

If you need help making a claim you can contact us at 1890-252-919.

What if my Pharmacist does not know that my family members are all part of the same family?

You can set your family up as a family group on www.medicalcard.ie and print off a certificate (family certificate) to give to your Pharmacist. That certificate will show all of the members of your family and in that case the pharmacy will not collect charges above the monthly limit of €10.

What if I don't have access to the internet to get the family certificate?

If no one in your family has access to the internet you can get assistance from your Local Health Office or call 1890-252-919 and we will take the details and send you the certificate. Your local Pharmacist may also be in position to assist. You will need to have the Medical Card number for each member of your family.

Do all Medical Card holders pay the prescription charge?

There will be no prescription charge for Children in the care of the HSE who have their own Medical Card. This includes children in care, foster care, foster care with relatives and other care placements. Carers responsible for children in care will pay the prescription charges to the pharmacy and claim a full refund from the HSE PCRS.

What about Methadone?

There will be no prescription charge for Methadone supplied to a person under the Methadone Treatment Protocol. These patients will pay prescription charges for any other items received under the Medical Card Scheme.

Prescription Charges - Frequently Asked Questions

Is the prescription charge payable if I get a Medical Card prescription from a Registered Dentist or a Registered Nurse Prescriber?

Yes.

What if I get prescriptions under other Schemes?

The prescription charge will not apply to items supplied under the Long Term Illness Scheme, the DPS (Drugs Payment Scheme) or private prescriptions. The charge does not apply to people covered by the Health (Amendment) Act 1996.

What if I get different prescriptions on a weekly/daily basis?

You will pay the prescription charge for each item up to the maximum of €10 per month, per person or family.

What if my pharmacy fills my prescription at the start of the month but then gives me the medication each week (or even daily) i.e. phased dispensing?

You will only pay the prescription charge for the initial dispensing of the medicine/item.

What are the arrangements for the homeless?

Homeless persons living in a residential setting will have the charge paid on their behalf by the provider of the accommodation who will make the necessary arrangements for collection of the charge from the residents.

Homeless persons not living in a residential setting, and with their own medical card, will pay the prescription charge.

What if I am in a Nursing Home or a Residential Disability Centre?

If you reside in a Nursing Home, either HSE or Private, or a Residential Disability Centre the provider of the accommodation will pay the charge on your behalf and will make the necessary arrangements for collection of the charge from you.

What about High Tech products/medicines?

As the supply of High Tech Medicines operates on the basis of a patient care fee, a prescription charge will not apply.

Where can I get more information?

For more information you can visit www.medicalcard.ie or www.hse.ie or call 1890-252-919 Monday to Friday 9am-5pm.