

Pharmacy services in B.C.

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Pharmacists are an important part of your health care team and offer a variety of services.

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How pharmacists can help you

Pharmacists can consult on and dispense prescriptions. They can also:

- Assess and prescribe for 21 [minor ailments](#) (for example, uncomplicated urinary tract infections (UTIs), allergies, pink eye, dermatitis and nicotine dependence)
- [Prescribe and dispense contraceptives](#) (birth control)
- [Renew or change some prescriptions](#)
- Provide an emergency supply of your prescription
- Give vaccines [and other drugs](#) by injection
- Help you [understand and manage](#) your medications and over-the-counter products

Pharmacists are licensed health care professionals. They are bound by the same confidentiality rules as a family doctor or nurse practitioner. Your health information and conversations are private and confidential.

Pharmacies charge different amounts for drugs and for dispensing them. You can compare prices and services before you fill a prescription.

[Register now](#) for B.C.'s [Fair PharmaCare](#) plan to get medication coverage based on your income. It takes minutes to register, and coverage is for life.

What to bring to the pharmacy

- Government-issued ID, like your [BC Services Card](#)
- Your [Personal Health Number \(PHN\)](#)

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content?id=68E2026B228948D1835B091AA6415F91>

Get help with a minor ailment

Pharmacists can assess and treat 21 minor ailments such as uncomplicated UTIs, allergies, pink eye (conjunctivitis) and dermatitis. The service is free for B.C. residents when provided in person, in a pharmacy.

Your visit may include:

- A prescription
- Advice for self-management or over-the-counter medication
- A recommendation to see another health care provider

Minor ailments self-assessment checklist

If your symptoms match a minor ailment below, you can book an appointment or visit a pharmacy for an assessment. The assessment is called the Minor Ailment and Contraception Service. Services offered and pharmacist availability may vary by location.

[[Book an appointment](#)]

For severe symptoms or medical emergencies, seek immediate medical attention or call [9-1-1](#).

Acne (mild)

- Whiteheads and/or blackheads, or
- Small red bumps and pimples filled with pus

Read more about [acne](#)

Allergies and hay fever

One or more of the following, unrelated to an infection such as cold or flu:

- Stuffy or runny nose (usually clear and watery)
- Sneezing
- Itchy nose, eyes, and/or throat

Read more about [allergies \(allergic rhinitis\)](#)

Canker sores (oral ulcers)

- Small, shallow, painful, recurrent sores on lining inside the mouth, cheek or on the tongue
- Lesions usually have red border with white or yellow centre

Read more about [canker sores](#)

Cold sores

- Begins with itching, tingling, or burning sensation at border of lip.
- A cluster of fluid-filled, painful blisters soon appear (usually within 24 hours), surrounded by redness.
- Blisters then break, crust over, and usually heal within 7-10 days

Read more about [cold sores](#)

Fungal infections

Jock itch:

- Large, round, red patches with bumpy or scaly, well-defined borders.
- Usually on upper inner thigh or groin. May spread to buttocks or stomach/abdomen
- Commonly itchy, burning

Athlete's foot:

- Commonly occurs between toes but may occur on other areas of the feet
- May be itchy, cracked or scaly, inflamed or blistered skin that burns and/or hurts

Ringworm:

- Small, round, red patch with well-defined, bumpy or scaly border that usually occurs on neck, trunk or limbs
- May feel itchy or burning

Nail infection:

- May occur in fingernails or toenails
- Commonly thickened, brittle nails, starting at tip of nail and spreading to the whole nail with yellow/white or orange/brown-coloured vertical streaks
- May have pain or discomfort

Read more about [jock itch](#); [athlete's foot](#); [ringworm](#); [fungal nail infections](#)

Headaches

- Mild to moderate pain, tightness on the sides of head and across forehead, without nausea or vomiting

Read more about [headaches](#)

Heartburn (acid reflux/ GERD)

- Burping, stomach acid rising from stomach into mouth
- Burning feeling in stomach or lower chest rising to the neck

Read more about [heartburn \(gastroesophageal reflux disease/GERD\)](#)

Hemorrhoids

- Itching, burning, swelling (with or without pain), or presence of a lump around anus/rectum, and/or
- Bright red blood during or after a bowel movement (may be light spotting on toilet paper or drops of blood in toilet bowl)

Read more about [hemorrhoids](#)

Hives and itching, including from bug bites (urticaria)

- Small bumps or blisters that may be painful, itchy and/or swollen
- May feel like a sharp burning pain or stinging

Read more about [dry skin and itching](#)

Impetigo

- Small blisters on skin that ooze fluid, then dry to form yellow-brown crust
- Usually appears around nose and mouth
- May itch, but usually not painful

Read more about [impetigo](#)

Menstrual pain

- Pain and cramps in the lower abdomen/belly, and/or
- Pain in the lower back before or during period

Read more about [menstrual cramps](#)

Nicotine dependence

A pharmacist can help with quitting cigarettes or using other tobacco products.

Pharmacists can start you on a free 12-week course of nicotine patches, lozenges or gum, covered by BC PharmaCare. Learn more at [Get help quitting tobacco](#).

They can also prescribe the oral medications varenicline or bupropion, which are covered by BC PharmaCare. If you register for the [Fair PharmaCare](#) plan online or over the phone, you are covered right away. <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/health-drug-coverage/pharmacare-for-bc-residents/who-we-cover>

Read more on [how to quit using tobacco products/smoking](#)

Pink eye (conjunctivitis)

- Red eye(s), plus watery or mucus-like discharge that is white, yellow or green, and/or
- Scratchy, burning, itching, or the feeling that something is in the eye

Read more about [pink eye](#)

Pinworms (also called threadworms)

- Itchy anus and belly pain are common, although some people have no symptoms

Note: Diagnosis usually involves visual inspection of worms or the use of adhesive (tape) to trap eggs for examination.

Read more about [pinworms](#)

Shingles

- Painful, blistering rash on one side of face or body, and
- Pain, burning, tingling or numbness around affected area 1 to 5 days before rash appears

Read more about [shingles](#)

Skin rash (dermatitis)

Includes diaper rash and seborrheic, contact, allergic, and atopic dermatitis. Symptoms may include one or more of the following:

- Dry, red and itchy skin
- Cracked and oozing blisters
- Scaly and patchy skin

Read more about [eczema \(atopic dermatitis\)](#) and [allergic reactions](#)

Sprains and strains

- Pain, swelling or tenderness (mild to medium severity)
- Redness or bruising
- Limited range of motion with muscle weakness
- Injury associated with overworking or straining

Read about [ankle sprains](#), [tendon injuries](#), [calf muscle injuries](#), [achilles tendon problems](#), [knee injuries](#), [muscle cramps](#)

Thrush (oral fungal infection)

- White or cream-white spots/patches on lips, inside mouth, on tongue and/or roof of mouth
- Cottage cheese-like appearance
- Patches can be scraped off

- May experience dry mouth and/or loss of taste

Read about [thrush](#)

Upset stomach (indigestion)

- Heartburn, nausea, bloating, stomach discomfort, feeling full soon after eating, burping up food, stomach acid or gas
- Read about [indigestion \(dyspepsia\)](#)

Urinary tract infection (uncomplicated)

- Pain while urinating
- Difficulty holding in urine, frequent urination
- Cloudy or strong-smelling urine

Read about uncomplicated urinary tract infections in:

- [Teenagers and adults](#)
- [Children](#)

If you are pregnant, please visit a doctor or nurse practitioner.

If you are male, please visit a doctor or nurse practitioner.

[Complicated urinary tract infections](#) cannot be assessed by a pharmacist.

Yeast infection (vaginal candidiasis)

- Vaginal itch, irritation and redness with white, cottage cheese-like discharge

Read about [vaginal yeast infection](#)

Get contraceptives (birth control)

Pharmacists can prescribe and provide many types of contraception (birth control).

Whether you have a prescription from a pharmacist or other healthcare provider, these contraceptives are [free for B.C. residents](#):

- Most prescription contraceptive pills
- Intrauterine devices (IUDs) – hormonal and copper*
- Hormonal implant*
- Hormonal vaginal ring

- Contraceptive injection (pharmacist can administer)
- Emergency contraception

*While the pharmacist can provide IUDs and implants, you will need to arrange a visit with a doctor or clinic for insertion.

Read about [contraception \(birth control\)](#).

[Book an appointment](#)

You can also visit a pharmacy to access this service. Services offered and appointment availability may vary by location.

Get immunizations and injections of prescribed medications

Pharmacists can give most vaccines and administer drugs by injection, including:

- Influenza (flu), COVID-19, shingles, measles, pneumonia, human papillomavirus (HPV), tetanus and more
- Medications prescribed by a health care provider, like B12 or hormone therapy

Vaccine availability and eligibility may vary by age and public funding criteria.

Call your pharmacy or visit their website to book an appointment for immunization or medication injection. You can also book an appointment in person.

For more information on flu and COVID vaccines, visit B.C.'s [respiratory illness page](#).

Change a prescription or get an emergency supply

Pharmacists can often renew or change your prescription. If a pharmacist renews or changes your prescription, you must pick it up at the same pharmacy location.

Renew your prescription

A pharmacist may be able to renew your prescription if:

- You used up all your medication and have no refills left, and

- Your condition is stable, you need to continue your medication, and you have been on the same medication at the same dosage (3 to 6 months or longer with no concerns), and
- Your prescription was issued in the past 24 months

Pharmacists cannot:

- Renew cancer chemotherapy prescriptions
- Renew a prescription if the prescriber has written “do not renew/adapt” on the prescription
- Renew prescriptions for narcotics and controlled drugs for more than 30 days or the amount of time originally prescribed, whichever is greater

Change your prescription

A pharmacist may be able to change your prescription dose, form (for example, tablet, capsule), regimen, or substitute it for a similar drug.

A pharmacist can change the dose, form or regimen for a prescription for a narcotic, controlled drug or targeted substance, if they do not dispense more than the original prescription.

Pharmacists cannot change:

- A prescription for a cancer chemotherapy agent
- A prescription that was written more than 2 years ago
- A prescription if the prescriber has written “do not renew/adapt” on the prescription
- A prescription from a veterinarian

Get an emergency supply

If you have lost or run out of medication that you urgently need, a pharmacy can provide an emergency short-term supply until you can get your prescription filled.

Prescriptions are valid for up to 2 years from the date they were written. If you have run out of medication and your prescription was written more than 2 years ago, your pharmacist may be able to provide an emergency supply until you can get a new prescription from a doctor or other prescriber.

Review and manage your medications

When you get a prescription filled, the pharmacist reviews your medications and considers potential drug interactions and side effects.

You can talk to them about your prescriptions or any concerns about your health.

Get coverage under BC PharmaCare

[BC PharmaCare](#) pays pharmacists a fee for most of the services above.

BC PharmaCare has 13 plans that help B.C. residents pay for eligible prescriptions, medical devices and pharmacy services.

The [Fair PharmaCare plan](#) is based on income. The lower your family income, the more help you get. All B.C. residents are encouraged to [register for Fair PharmaCare](#).

Use the interactive [PharmaCare Coverage Compass](#) to learn which BC PharmaCare plans you may qualify for, next steps and where to get more information.

View your prescription history

You can access your B.C. prescription records dating back to 1995 through the [Health Gateway app](#).

I have questions

For questions about your health or services near you, contact HealthLink BC, available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

- [8-1-1](#)
- 711 (Teletypewriter (TTY) relay service)

For questions about minor ailments and contraception services, and for help booking an appointment, contact Service BC, available Monday to Friday, 8 am to 4:30 pm.

- 1-833-882-0022

Note: Service BC agents can't answer questions about specific medical conditions or treatment.

Translators are available.

[Video Relay Services \(VRS\) sign language interpretation](#) is free for people who are deaf, hard of hearing or speech impaired.