

# New limits on blood glucose test strips

As stewards of private health benefits plans in B.C., we believe it is important to continually evolve our policies using evidence-based research, and to align with BC PharmaCare when appropriate for our Members and plan structures. Pacific Blue Cross is committed to ensuring that Members have access to the treatments that keep them healthy, while keeping the sustainability of your plan in mind.

Treatment plans for individuals who manage their diabetes with insulin involve testing glucose levels on a regular basis. However, research has indicated that blood glucose test strips have a limited benefit for many patients who do not take insulin to treat their diabetes. Based on best evidence, and in alignment with BC PharmaCare's recommendations, a Pacific Blue Cross Member's annual limit of blood glucose testing strips will now be determined by the diabetes treatment they are receiving. We will be sending individual letters to impacted Members explaining this update.

## How things work now

Historically, patients with diabetes were advised to monitor their blood sugar daily regardless of whether they were taking insulin or not. To account for recommended frequency of testing, Pacific Blue Cross allocated 3,000 test strips for all Members with diabetes. For patients managing diabetes with insulin, there will be no change to the number of blood glucose test strips allocated per year.

## How blood glucose test strip limits are changing

The management of diabetes is complex and involves much more than just keeping track of blood sugar levels. The majority of Type 2 patients are not treated with insulin, and can instead regulate their glucose levels through diet, exercise and in some cases, medication. Research has shown that frequent self-monitoring of blood sugar for non-insulin Type 2 patients does not improve outcomes and may lead to decreased quality of life.

Based on best evidence, Pacific Blue Cross will match the limits on blood glucose testing strips established in 2015 by BC PharmaCare. The updated limits will also ensure those who need test strips to help manage the disease will continue to have access to them.

Effective January 1st, 2019, limits on blood glucose strips will be as follows:

DIABETES TREATMENT CATEGORY	NUMBER OF BGTS* ALLOWED WITHIN A CALENDAR YEAR
Patients managing diabetes with insulin	3,000
Patients on medications with high risk of causing hypoglycemia	400
Patients on medications with low risk of causing hypoglycemia	200
Patients managing diabetes through diet/lifestyle therapy only (no insulin or diabetes medications)	200

## What you should know

By using evidence-based research to inform our policies, Pacific Blue Cross is ensuring that Members have access to the treatments that keep them healthy and keep your plan sustainable. In certain circumstances, periodic increases in testing may be warranted, resulting in a need for more strips than a Member's annual limit allows. Members who meet specific criteria and are not on insulin can request an additional 100 test strips per year by having their prescriber complete a Pacific Blue Cross Prior Authorization form on their behalf.

Questions? We've got over 700 local experts to help get you answers. Feel free to contact your Account Executive or our team at [service@pac.bluecross.ca](mailto:service@pac.bluecross.ca).

\*BGTS — Blood Glucose Test Strips