

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

About NDSS Changes

From 1 July 2016 some important changes are happening to the NDSS.

There are no changes to the types of products available under the NDSS, but the way people access these products may change.

People will still be able to access NDSS products through their local participating community pharmacy access point. In fact the Federal Government wants to extend the number of community pharmacies that provide NDSS products to make it more convenient for people with diabetes.

NDSS products will no longer be available through Diabetes Australia (DA) or state and territory diabetes organisations. This means people will no longer be able to order products via the Diabetes Australia shops, the NDSS 1300 number or via the website.

Diabetes Australia and state and territory diabetes organisations will instead focus efforts on continuing to provide education services for people with diabetes.

There will be no changes to NDSS education services funded by the Government - in fact the Government will be increasing funding to expand education and support available to people with diabetes.

Community Pharmacies have made up more than 90% of all NDSS access points in Australia for over ten years, so people can be confident that if they have not accessed pharmacy before for this, they will receive a high level of service.

Topics (A-Z):

Advice

Q. Will people still be able to access the NDSS telephone service?

Access to this important telephone information service will not change. People can still get advice about diabetes products over the phone through Diabetes Australia. However, people will no longer be able to order NDSS products over the phone. Instead people will be able to access these products from their local community pharmacy access point.

Q. Will staff at new pharmacies be trained in products?

Yes. As part of pharmacy's ongoing quality and assurance program, new pharmacies providing NDSS products will be trained and supported in supplying and ordering products. People can also continue to get support and advice from Diabetes Australia about NDSS products over the phone.

Q. Can we still phone to get information from Diabetes Australia or NDSS?

Yes. This phone number will continue to operate and people can continue to call to receive information about the NDSS.

Blood Glucose Test Strips

Q: What are the new restrictions for accessing blood glucose test strips BGTS?

Starting from 1 July 2016, all people with type 2 diabetes not using insulin will receive an initial six month supply of subsidised blood glucose test strips. After six months, they will be eligible for subsidised test strips if their doctor or other authorised health professional wants them to use test strips. This change follows the independent advice of the expert Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee.

Importantly, if a person needs access to subsidised blood glucose test strips for clinical reasons, they will continue to receive access.

These changes do not affect people who use insulin.

Q: Why are the new restrictions on blood glucose test strips being implemented?

A review of products used in the management of diabetes found that there is limited evidence that self-monitoring of blood glucose improves blood glucose control, quality of life or long-term complications in people with type 2 diabetes who are not using insulin. As a result, the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee recommended more targeted access to test strips for people with type 2 diabetes to ensure that patients are using the most appropriate products.

Q. How do people access more blood glucose test strips after six months?

A person will need an authorisation from their doctor or authorised health professional for subsidised blood glucose test strips after the initial six months.

A person can still purchase blood glucose test strips over-the-counter at any community pharmacy after six months.

However they will only be subsidised if the person has an authorisation from their doctor or authorised health professional, and they are supplied with the product from a community pharmacy access point

Q. Is there a form a GP or authorised health professional needs to fill out for people to access NDSS products? There will be a standard form to approve additional access to blood glucose test strips and this will be available to all doctors and authorised health professionals.

The initial 6 month supply of subsidised test strips starts from the first time a person buys products on or after 1 July 2016. For example, if a person buys NDSS products in May and then again in August, the 6 month supply limit will be from the date of their August supply as this was after July 1.

Q. A person has been testing their blood glucose levels regularly for twenty years. They don't test every day, but test when they need to because things are changing. Will they still be able to access these products?

If a person has a clinical need identified by their doctor or other authorised health professional, they will continue to have access to subsidised blood glucose test strips. This follows the expert advice of the independent Pharmaceutical Benefits

Advisory Committee. These changes do not affect people using insulin. There will also be continuing access for people on certain medications, people with inter-current illnesses and women with gestational diabetes. If a person fits within these categories, they should talk with their doctor or authorised health professional as they may still be able to access subsidised blood glucose test strips.

Q. Who can a patient see to get approval for blood glucose test strips? Does it have to be a GP?

If a person is registered on the NDSS they can automatically access an initial 6 month supply of blood glucose test strips after 30 June 2016 and they will not need a prescription or medical authorisation for this supply.

After this six month period, if their doctor or authorised health professional determines that they do not need to continue to use blood glucose test strips, they will no longer be able to access subsidised test strips under the NDSS.

Note that these changes only apply to people with type 2 diabetes who are not using insulin.

Q. I have type 1 diabetes. Can I still access blood glucose test strips?

Yes. Access to blood glucose test strips will not change for people with type 1 diabetes. They will continue to receive them subsidised under the NDSS.

Q. I can't afford to buy my own blood glucose test strips. How will I access them?

If a person's doctor or authorised health professional thinks a person needs to use them, they will continue to be subsidised under the NDSS.

Insulin pumps

Q. Will insulin pump consumables be available from pharmacies? Will pharmacy staff have the knowledge and expertise to provide insulin pump consumables?

Yes. Insulin pump consumables will be available at the NDSS community pharmacy access point of a person's choice. Where the pharmacy does not have the IPC in stock, it can be supplied to the pharmacy in 24 hours.

As part of the changes, pharmacy staff will receive access to information and education regarding insulin pump consumables. It is important that people visit the community pharmacy they will regularly access and speak to them about their needs before they need their next supply of consumables.

People will still be able to talk to Diabetes Australia with experienced staff on the phone (1300 136588) about IPCs. The NDSS information line will continue and operators can provide assistance.

Q. Will I be able to continue to access insulin pump consumables up to and beyond 30 June 2016?

Yes. Ordering of IPCs will remain unchanged up to 30 June 2016.

From 1 July 2016 IPCs can be accessed from the NDSS community pharmacy access point of your choice. If the pharmacy does not have the IPC in stock, it can be supplied to the pharmacy in 24 hours.

Also, a short-term transition arrangement will be in place to allow registrants continued access to IPCs through their state/territory diabetes organisation (via phone/ online), however home delivery will incur postage costs.

Q: Do I need to stock-up on insulin pump consumables before the new arrangements take effect?

Access to IPCs will continue, although under new arrangements. In addition to new access arrangements through NDSS community pharmacies a short-term transition arrangement will be in place to allow registrants continued access to IPCs through their state/territory diabetes organisation (via phone/ online), however home delivery will incur postage costs.

Q: My local diabetes shop is closing – how will I be able to access insulin pump consumables?

From 1 July 2016 IPCs can be accessed from the NDSS community pharmacy access point of your choice. If the pharmacy does not have the IPC in stock, it can be supplied to the pharmacy in 24 hours.

Also, a short-term transition arrangement will be in place to allow registrants continued access to IPCs through their state/territory diabetes organisation (via phone/ online), however home delivery will incur postage costs.

Ordering

Q. My patient has been ordering their diabetes products online. Will they be able to do this anymore?

The ordering process is changing from 1 July 2016, and a person will no longer be able to order products online from Diabetes Australia and State and Territory organisations. There may be some short term online/ telephone ordering arrangements in place for people needing IPCs.

People will need to order and collect products from their local NDSS community pharmacy access point. Some pharmacies have online and phone ordering – people should check their nearby pharmacies to find out how they handle their orders and any associated costs. If a person lives a long distance from the pharmacy they may wish to set up regular ordering of their products so that they are available when they next visit the pharmacy.

Q. Why are the supply changes happening?

The changes will mean more efficient distribution – NDSS products will be supplied through the existing community pharmacy distribution network – the same way a person can get medicines subsidised under the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme.

The changes save money, which is good for the Australian taxpayer, while people will continue to get the products and services they need. It will also mean the Government is able to invest more funding into vital education and support services delivered to people with diabetes by Diabetes Australia and the state/territory diabetes organisations.

Q. Will pharmacy increase the price of diabetes products?

There are no changes to price. NDSS products will continue to be subsidised by the Government, and distributed by a more efficient network. From 1 July 2016, the copayment a person pays for products will not change. There may be charges related to home delivery or postage if these are required, this information can be provided by the community pharmacy access point.