



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Changes to the NDSS

Q. What are the changes to the NDSS since 1 July 2016?

Since 1 July 2016, there are two major changes to how registrants can access NDSS products.

1. NDSS products are no longer available through Diabetes Australia. Instead, subsidised NDSS products are only available through community pharmacies that are NDSS Access Points. NDSS Products include blood glucose test strips, urine test strips, insulin pen needles and syringes, and insulin pump consumables.
2. There are restrictions on access to subsidised blood glucose test strips for registrants with type 2 diabetes who are not using insulin,

Advice

Q. Why have supply arrangements been changed?

The changes provide more efficient distribution of NDSS products as they are now supplied through the existing community pharmacy distribution network, the same way that medicines are distributed to pharmacies.

Q. Has the cost of NDSS products changed?

No. NDSS products continue to be subsidised by the Government, and there is no change in the price (co-payment) registrants pay or the range of products available. However, the pharmacy may charge the registrant for home delivery or postage if these are requested.

Q. Are registrants still able to access support from Diabetes Australia, and state and territory diabetes organisations?

Yes. Support and advice from Diabetes Australia about NDSS products, and self-management of diabetes, will continue to be provided to all NDSS registrants over the phone (1300 136 588) and through ongoing education and support programs.

Q. Which health professionals are able to register people with the NDSS?

For people to register on the NDSS they must have a medical practitioner, credentialed diabetes educator or nurse practitioner certify their registration form.

Once registered, patients have lifelong access to a range of education and support programs designed specifically for all types of diabetes. Registration also allows access to subsidised products through a network of over 5,000 community pharmacies.

Blood Glucose Test Strips

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

Since 1 July 2016, all registrants with **type 2 diabetes not using insulin** will be eligible to access an initial six month supply of subsidised blood glucose test strips. This means they will be able to access blood glucose test strips, as required, over a six-month period, starting any time after 1 July 2016.

The initial 6 month supply starts from the first time a person accesses blood glucose test strips on the NDSS on or after 1 July 2016. For example, if a person buys NDSS blood glucose test strips in May 2016 and then again in August 2016, the six month supply limit will be from the date of their August supply as this was after 1 July 2016. This will be automatically recorded on the NDSS IT system accessed by pharmacies when supplying products to Registrants. The initial six month access period applies to both new and existing NDSS registrants. Even where a registrant has been accessing test strips for several years, their six month initial access period will commence from their first order of test strips on or after 1 July 2016. A person will not need a medical authorisation for this initial supply.

After six months, they will be eligible for subsidised test strips if in the opinion of a health professional their condition warrants the continued monitoring of blood glucose.

These changes do not affect registrants who use insulin, women with gestational diabetes or those registered with a rare form of diabetes on the NDSS.

Q: Why have the restrictions on blood glucose test strips been introduced?

The Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee recommended restrictions to access to blood glucose test strips based on research including the results of a Post Market Review on products used in the management of diabetes.

This review found there was 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**. The outcomes of the Review are available at <http://www.pbs.gov.au/info/reviews/diabetes>

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

A person with **type 2 diabetes who is not using insulin** will need a Blood Glucose Test Strip Six Month Approval Form from their doctor or authorised health professional for subsidised blood glucose test strips after the initial six months.

The decision to provide additional six month access is based on the clinical judgement of the health professional as to whether the patient benefits from additional monitoring for example:

- The person is taking a medicine which may adversely affect glycaemic control i.e. sulfonylureas;
- The person has an inter-current illnesses that may adversely affect glycaemic control;
- The person's diabetes is inadequately controlled;
- There is a clinical need for the person to self-monitor their blood glucose level; or
- There has been a change to the persons existing diabetes management within the previous three (3) months.

Authorisation cannot be retrospective and the six month period cannot be accessed in segments (that is, the six months cannot be put on hold and recommenced at a later time). There is no limit on the number of authorisations that may be obtained as long as the registrant continues to have a clinical need for self-monitoring.

A registrant can still purchase non-subsidised blood glucose test strips over-the-counter at any community pharmacy, at any time, without any restrictions.

Q. Is there a form that needs be completed for registrants to access blood glucose test strips?

Yes. There is a Blood Glucose Test Strip Six Month Approval Form to authorise additional six months access to blood glucose test strips. This form is available from the NDSS website at <https://www.ndss.com.au/forms>

Registrants will need to take this completed and signed form to the community pharmacy before additional subsidised products can be provided.

Q. Who are the authorised health professionals that can approve additional access to blood glucose test strips?

Medical practitioners, nurse practitioners and credentialed diabetes educators.

Q. Blood glucose test strips have been removed from the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme? What does this mean?

All blood glucose test strips were removed from the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) on 1 July 2016.

Blood glucose test strips remain available through the NDSS, and people with diabetes have continued access through the NDSS. The types of blood glucose test strips available under the NDSS are the same as those previously available under the PBS.

Q. Will Indigenous Australians accessing blood glucose test strips under the Closing the Gap arrangements and through Remote Area Aboriginal Health Services continue to have access to blood glucose test strips?

Yes. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are currently eligible for a lower co-payment, or no co-payment, under the Closing the Gap arrangements will continue to receive similar subsidisation under the NDSS.

NDSS products, including blood glucose test strips, will continue to be provided to Remote Area Aboriginal Health Services and remote clinics.

Insulin Pump Consumables

Q. Are insulin pump consumables available from community pharmacy Access Points?

Yes. Insulin pump consumables (IPC) are available at all NDSS community pharmacy Access Points. Where the pharmacy does not have the IPC in stock, it can be supplied to the pharmacy, usually within 24-72 hours.

As part of the changes, pharmacies have received access to information and education on how to supply IPC.

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

Patients who live a long distance from their nearest NDSS community pharmacy may wish to speak to the pharmacy about their IPC needs and consider setting up a process for managing orders, for example, calling in advance and determining a collection date.

Under the new arrangements, a community pharmacy Access Point is responsible for collecting and paying the co-payment to the Government for all NDSS products, including IPC. Some pharmacies may have a policy for IPC order co-payments to be paid at the time of placing the order.

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

No. The ordering process changed from 1 July 2016, and a person will no longer be able to order products over the phone, through Diabetes Australia shops or online via Diabetes Australia agent websites.

Registrants will need to order and collect products from their local NDSS community pharmacy Access Point.