
NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Health

Chronic hepatitis C medication now available for all British Columbians

VICTORIA – Any British Columbian living with chronic hepatitis C now is able to access treatment, regardless of the severity of their disease, Health Minister Adrian Dix announced today.

In addition to expanding coverage to all British Columbians, a new chronic hepatitis C drug has been added to the PharmaCare formulary.

“In years past, a hepatitis C diagnosis was a stressful and lifelong struggle,” said Dix. “I’m pleased to share that, as of today, anyone in B.C. living with this now-curable virus will have a choice of several treatment options – all of which are fully funded under PharmaCare.”

The new drug, sofosbuvir/velpatasvir/voxilaprevir, also known as Vosevi, received a positive recommendation from the national Common Drug Review in January 2018. The drug was developed for adult patients with difficult-to-treat chronic hepatitis C that has been unsuccessfully treated with other medications.

“Drug treatments for chronic hepatitis C continue to improve and evolve,” added Dix. “Adding Vosevi to the PharmaCare formulary will ensure that patients have multiple treatment options available to them, which is especially important if a particular drug is not performing to its best ability.”

An estimated 73,000 British Columbians live with this virus. The list cost to the health system for chronic hepatitis C treatment has ranged from \$45,000 to over \$100,000 per patient, depending on the drug and disease progression.

The following chronic hepatitis C medications are covered under PharmaCare:

- Daklinza (daclatasvir)
- Epclusa (sofosbuvir/velpatasvir)
- Harvoni (ledipasvir/sofosbuvir)
- Sovaldi (sofosbuvir)
- Vosevi (sofosbuvir/velpatasvir/voxilaprevir) – **new**
- Zepatier (elbasvir/grazoprevir)

Each of these treatment options are highly effective. Doctors will consider the patient’s medical needs, along with PharmaCare’s coverage criteria for each drug, and apply for the drug they feel is the best option for the patient.

Approximately one-quarter of those living with hepatitis C in B.C. are undiagnosed and unaware they have the virus. Roughly 24% of hepatitis C patients are able to clear the virus

without treatment. However, the remaining 76% of patients will develop chronic hepatitis C. Many chronic hepatitis C patients remain in stable condition for years or decades before the virus may advance. The new all-oral, chronic hepatitis C therapies are highly effective, curing more than 95% of people treated.

If left untreated, chronic hepatitis C can be a life-threatening communicable disease, with serious complications, such as liver failure and liver cancer. Risk and harm-reduction practices are strongly encouraged for those who may be at higher risk for reacquiring the virus after successful treatment, including people who inject drugs, men who have sex with men, and commercial sex workers.

Hepatitis C is the most frequent cause of premature death among reportable infectious diseases in North America, and has become the most frequent cause of premature death among people living with both hepatitis C and HIV.

Quick Facts:

- Hepatitis C is a serious, communicable disease that is spread through direct contact with the blood of an infected person. Symptoms may include fatigue, jaundice, abdominal pain and joint pain. In some people, it can cause liver damage (cirrhosis) or liver cancer.
- Once someone is successfully treated and cured of hepatitis C infection, they are no longer able to pass the disease on to others.
- There is no vaccine to prevent hepatitis C infection.
- In 2017, PharmaCare coverage was provided to 2,657 people in B.C. for medication used to treat chronic hepatitis C.

Learn More:

For more information about B.C.'s PharmaCare program:

<http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/health-drug-coverage/pharmacare-for-bc-residents>

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