

Making Prescription Drugs Free for People 65 and Over

Expanding OHIP+ Will Make Prescription Drugs Free for Nearly One in Two Ontarians

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Premier Kathleen Wynne today announced Ontario's plan to make prescription drugs free for people 65 and over, ensuring millions of people can afford the care they need during this period of economic change and uncertainty.

Through an expansion of OHIP+, more than 4,400 prescription drugs will be available free of charge to everyone 65 and over. The Premier was joined by Minister of Health and Long-Term Care Helena Jaczek and Minister of Seniors Affairs Dipika Damerla at the Leaside Curling Club to lay out the government's plan to expand OHIP+ and make life more affordable for 2.6 million seniors and their families.

Starting August 1, 2019, anyone aged 65 or older will no longer have to pay a deductible or co-payment and would be able to present their eligible prescription and OHIP number at any Ontario pharmacy and receive their medication for free. On January 1, 2018, Ontario introduced OHIP+ Children and Youth Pharmacare, which made eligible prescription drugs free for everyone 24 and under and is the largest expansion of medicare in a generation. By expanding OHIP+ to seniors in Budget 2018, people 65 and over will now save an average of \$240 every year. Prescription drugs covered by this program include medications for cholesterol, hypertension, thyroid conditions, diabetes and asthma.

Today's announcement builds on steps taken to improve care and make life more affordable for seniors in Ontario, including:

- The [Seniors' Public Transit Tax Credit](#) introduced in 2017 and saving seniors up to \$450 a year on travel costs
- \$17 million per year to provide a [high-dose flu vaccine](#) free of charge to seniors, beginning in 2018-19
- A free [shingles vaccination](#) now available for roughly 850,000 seniors between the ages of 65 and 70, saving them an additional \$170 and helping to keep them healthy
- Ontario's leadership in achieving an [enhanced Canada Pension Plan](#), which will result in greater retirement security for today's workers
- [Aging with Confidence: Ontario's Action Plan for Seniors](#), released in November 2017.

Making prescription drugs free for people 65 and over is part of the government's plan to support care, create opportunity and make life more affordable during this period of rapid economic change. The plan includes a higher minimum wage and better working conditions,

free tuition for hundreds of thousands of students, easier access to affordable child care, and free prescription drugs for everyone under 25 through the biggest expansion of medicare in a generation.

QUOTES

" The costs of health care can cause anxiety and stress, especially for people 65 and over who are living on fixed incomes and are often required to take multiple medications. We all want the best care for our parents and grandparents, and I believe government needs to do more.

Providing prescription drugs at no cost for millions of seniors is going to make life more affordable and help seniors stay healthy and independent. It is the right thing to do for seniors and their families. With nearly one in two people now to receive free prescriptions, we are that much closer to the universal pharmacare program that people need. We are leading Canada forward. And we can't turn back now."

- Kathleen Wynne

Premier of Ontario

" Everybody in this province, no matter their age, deserves the chance to lead healthy, happy lives. Providing prescription drugs to seniors at no cost moves us one step closer to the goal of pharmacare for all people in Ontario."

- Dr. Helena Jaczek

Minister of Health and Long-Term Care

" Through investments like this, Ontario is furthering its goal of being the best place in the world to grow older. Providing the supports seniors need to be independent, healthy and active, safe and socially connected, is a priority of our government. Ensuring seniors have access to free prescription drugs will help them remain healthy, so they can live their best lives."

- Dipika Damerla

Minister of Seniors Affairs

QUICK FACTS

- Currently, everyone 65 and over is eligible for prescription drug coverage through the Ontario Drug Benefit (ODB) program, which requires seniors to pay deductibles and co-payments based on their income and other factors. Under the ODB, seniors are paying an average of \$240 a year out of pocket for their medications.
- This expansion of OHIP+ will eliminate the ODB's deductible and co-payments for seniors, making over 4,400 medications completely free for everyone 65 and older who is OHIP-insured. Ontario will invest approximately \$575 million by 2020-21 to align our seniors program with OHIP+: Children and Youth Pharmacare.

- Seniors (65 years and older) are Ontario's fastest-growing age group. By 2041, it is projected that 25 per cent of Ontario's population will be 65 years or older, almost doubling from 2016 to 4.6 million seniors.
- Ontario's [online search tool](#) helps people quickly and easily search through a list of more than 4,400 publicly funded medications and other drug products.
- Through the [Trillium Drug Program](#), Ontario makes life more affordable for those who spend approximately three to four per cent or more of their after-tax income on eligible prescription drugs by reducing the cost of medication to up to \$2 per prescription, after a deductible.
- Since launching on January 1st, 2018, OHIP+ has provided free prescriptions to over one million children and youth. The first of its kind program in Canada makes Ontario a leading voice in the movement for a universal pharmacare program that expands medicare to make prescriptions free for all Canadians.

LEARN MORE

- [Aging with Confidence: Ontario's Action Plan for Seniors](#)
- [Patients First Action Plan for Health Care](#)
- [Ontario Drug Benefit Program](#)

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