

# PIPEWRENCH

## OHIP—WHAT'S NEW?

Changes to the Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP) came into effect **October 1, 2019**. Several previously covered services have now been delisted.

The changes come after recommendations from a physician-led group reviewed coverage of insured services.

Some of the changes include:

- Delisting imaging for most sinus problems
- Loop recorders used for the monitoring of heart disorders
- Post-coital testing of cervical mucous
- Removal of ear wax when not medically necessary
- Dipstick pregnancy tests, unless patient in imminent harm
- House calls, unless patient must be seen at home (ie. Elderly, Palliative and Housebound patients).



## OHIP—WHAT'S NEW? CONTINUED...

Also beginning **October 1, 2019** the physician-led group recommended the following updates to OHIP-insured services.



### Improve the Quality of Patient Care

- Use more accurate diagnostic imaging for sinus problems.
- Refer patients to specialized clinics for chronic hip and knee pain to improve arthritic care.
- Update the use of ambulatory cardiac monitoring devices.
- Improve access to primary and specialty care by simplifying referrals to specialists.
- Use more effective testing to diagnose infertility.

### Reduce Medically Unnecessary Services

- Perform ear wax removal procedure only when, medically necessary.
- Conduct Larynx examinations during stomach examinations only when, medically necessary.
- Continue access to urine pregnancy tests when, medically necessary.
- Improve primary care access by streamlining pre-operative assessments.
- Improve access to Knee Arthroscopies for patients with Degenerative Knee Disease.
- Fund physician premiums for house calls only for frail elderly and housebound patients.

## Choosing A Pharmacy— What to Look For<sup>1</sup>

Today's savvy patients/consumers recognize that the scope of practice for pharmacists is expanding and resulting in other and arguably more important considerations when choosing a pharmacy. That's not to say convenience and access aren't important—all other things being equal, a more conveniently located pharmacy with better business hours gives you greater access to your pharmacist, which is definitely important. But access alone will have little to no impact in helping you achieve your health or disease management goals.

While pharmacists today are often still responsible for ensuring accuracy in dispensing, that task is now more in line with the role of registered pharmacy technicians. Instead the pharmacist should be ensuring that the medication prescribed by your doctor is the most appropriate treatment for you.

So, before you settle on a pharmacy, here's some crucial factors to consider...

**A holistic approach.** Any practicing pharmacist, will be able to provide you with over-the-counter and prescription drug information, including reason for use, mode of administration, drug interactions, side-effects, etc. But their new expanded scope of service has shifted the focus away from just drug products and towards the patient as a whole – that means you, your disease states, your medication, and all other factors that will impact the success of your treatment.

**Personalized service.** A pharmacist who has embraced this new expanded role will not only offer a variety of comprehensive professional services to help you manage your condition, but will also tailor which specific services are offered to you based on your unique health needs. This approach makes it evident that the services are not being offered for revenue generating purposes in the pharmacy – but to help you achieve your individual health goals.

**Referrals and recommendations.** New era pharmacists are also well versed in the resources available in your community and will not hesitate to make a referral based on your needs. These pharmacists recognize where their scope ends and another health care professional's scope begins. But rather than simply telling you, "that's not within my scope," they will go the extra mile and connect you with someone else or at least point you in the right direction.



**A partner in your health.** A good pharmacist will take an active role in helping you and your doctor manage your illness, which includes meeting regularly with you and reviewing your full list of active medications to address any drug therapy problems and ensure that:

- All your medications have a purpose (i.e., you're not continuing to take a medication for a condition that has been resolved);
- Your active medical conditions are being managed (e.g., you have asthma but not currently taking any asthma medication to manage symptoms);
- There are no conflicts between your various medications (i.e. drug interactions);
- All your medications are dosed appropriately to ensure maximum efficacy and minimal risk of side-effects.

**Customer service is still important.** You still need to have a certain rapport with your pharmacist – you want to feel respected and valued as a patient. You need to feel comfortable reaching out with questions and feeling that you're being heard.

Bottom line? To tell whether a pharmacist is embracing the new expanded role, pay attention to how they engage with you and other patients. If you can, visit several pharmacies in your area and check them out.

<sup>1</sup>Green Shield Canada  
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