



Q & A Factsheet For First Nations' Leaders:

The Pharmacare Act and Probable Impacts on First Nations

Purpose: This fact sheet offers an overview of the *Pharmacare Act* and any potential impact on First Nations' people on Turtle Island. It outlines the benefits, challenges, and opportunities of the *Pharmacare Act* for First Nations.

What is the *Pharmacare Act*?

The *Pharmacare Act* was passed on October 10, 2024. It outlines the foundational principles for national universal pharmacare in Canada and the federal government's intention to work with provinces, territories, Indigenous peoples, partners and stakeholders to collaborate on a step-by-step approach towards national pharmacare.

The Act sets out the next steps that the Government of Canada will take, starting with making a range of contraception and diabetes medications free.

In addition, the Government is setting up a fund for diabetes devices and supplies (e.g., syringes, glucose test strips) to help people manage and monitor their diabetes and administer their medication.

Further information on the details of this new coverage will be made available after the Government of Canada signs agreements with willing provinces and territories.

How does the *Pharmacare Act* affect me as a First Nation client?

For registered (status) First Nations people, the *Pharmacare Act* does not change your coverage for medications under Indigenous Services Canada's (ISC) – Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB) Program. You should continue to access coverage for eligible benefits, including diabetes medications and contraceptives, through NIHB.

For those not already covered under NIHB, such as non-status First Nations, the legislation aims to support greater access to medications, starting with free access to a range of contraception and diabetes medications.

How will the *Pharmacare Act* address the unique healthcare needs of the First Nations' populations?

The *Pharmacare Act* commits the Government of Canada to collaborating with Indigenous peoples along with other partners with the aim of continuing to work toward the implementation of national universal pharmacare.

In implementing the *Pharmacare Act*, it is AFN's view that the Government of Canada must address the unique healthcare needs and challenges of First Nations' people, including cultural, geographical, and historical barriers, such as racism.



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What roles do First Nations organizations and leaders play in advocating for the inclusion of First Nations in the *Pharmacare Act*?

First Nations organizations and leaders will continue to meet and advocate for culturally appropriate healthcare and the inclusion of their rights.

What did the First Nations Chiefs in Assembly do in response to a proposed universal pharmacare plan in 2019?

In July 2019, the First Nations Chiefs rejected the National Pharmacare Plan recommended to the federal Minister of Health by the independent Advisory Committee on the Implementation of National Pharmacare, asserting it violated their rights and the Medicine Chest Agreement.

What is the AFN's role related to the *Pharmacare Act*?

The AFN acknowledges its limitations in decision-making about Treaty Rights but will provide information to support First Nations in understanding all their healthcare options.

What are some potential challenges or barriers to implement the *Pharmacare Act* for First Nations people?

AFN identified challenges including historical mistrust of the federal government's healthcare, poor communications with First Nations, and inadequate culturally sensitive healthcare services.

How can the *Pharmacare Act* contribute to improved health outcomes and accessible pharmacare in First Nations regions and communities?

In 2016, AFN and Health Canada contracted KahuiTautoko Consulting (Canada) Ltd, to review the NIHB Program, leading to recommendations for improved First Nations governance and pharmacare access through collaboration and recognition of historical traumas.

The *Pharmacare Act*, adopted October 10, 2024, commits the Government of Canada to working collaboratively to build a national universal pharmacare system that improves accessibility, affordability, appropriate use and universal coverage. The Act commits to engaging and collaborating with Indigenous peoples with the aim of continuing to work toward the implementation of national universal pharmacare.

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