

Accessing Thalidomide in BC – Information for Patients

Why have I been given this handout?

You and your doctor have decided that you should take thalidomide to treat your cancer. As in most other Canadian provinces, the BC Cancer Agency is not provided with funding for thalidomide for new patients. This means that you may have to cover the cost of your thalidomide treatment. Currently, none of the private insurance companies in Canada pay for thalidomide.

You will play an important role in obtaining the thalidomide. We will provide you with as much information as we can, including information about how to pay for your thalidomide. This handout will explain:

- Health Canada approval – through the Special Access Programme (**SAP**)
- financial assistance – through the Canadian Thalomid® Access Program (**CANTAP**), a program established by Celgene, the manufacturer of thalidomide, to help patients who may not be able to pay for their thalidomide
- BC Cancer Agency approval – through the Compassionate Access Program (**CAP**), formerly called the Undesignated Indication process

What will my doctor do?

Thalidomide has not been approved by Health Canada for marketing in Canada. It is only available through the SAP. Your doctor must submit a special request to Health Canada explaining why this medication is necessary for you. If this request is approved, Health Canada will tell Celgene that they are allowed to supply your medication. Only one month's supply of medication will be provided at a time. Your doctor must submit a new request for each monthly refill.

Your doctor will also help you complete CANTAP registration and eligibility forms.

After all of the other paperwork is received, your doctor will complete a CAP application.

What should I do first?

Work with your doctor to complete your CANTAP application. CANTAP will assess your financial need and determine if you are eligible to receive thalidomide free of charge. If your doctor does not have the forms, call CANTAP at 1-888-611-6817.



BC Cancer Agency

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I have been approved by CANTAP. What happens next?

Your doctor will submit a request to CAP. Your CAP approval will be a vital piece of communication within the BC Cancer Agency. It tells pharmacy staff that you have SAP approval and CANTAP approval, and that your medication can be ordered and dispensed to you **free of charge**.

I have been denied CANTAP coverage. What should I do next?

You must decide if you are willing to pay for thalidomide and you must inform your doctor of your decision. Celgene will not release your medication until they confirm this with your doctor.

If you decide to pay for your thalidomide, your doctor will still need to submit a request to CAP. Your CAP approval will be a vital piece of communication within the BC Cancer Agency. It tells pharmacy staff that you have SAP approval, that **you will be paying** for your thalidomide, and that your medication can be ordered and dispensed.

How will I get my thalidomide?

Talk to your BC Cancer Agency or hospital pharmacy. Once SAP, CANTAP, and CAP are complete, the pharmacy can prepare your prescription. They will tell you when you can pick it up or they can mail it to you. If you are paying for thalidomide, the pharmacy can also tell you the cost for this prescription.

How do I pay?

If you go to a BC Cancer Agency pharmacy, the Finance department will send you a bill in the mail. They will include information about payment options. You may choose to set up pre-authorized credit card payments or you may mail a cheque to Finance each time they send you a bill.

If you go to a hospital pharmacy, ask your pharmacist about payment options.

Who should I call for more information?

For general inquiries, call CAP at 604-877-6277.

For information about your prescription, call your BC Cancer Agency / hospital pharmacy.

BC Cancer Agency Pharmacies:

Vancouver: 604-707-5983. Toll-free: 1-800-663-3333, ext. 5983.

Fraser Valley: 604-930-4002. Toll-free: 1-800-523-2885, ext. 4002.

Vancouver Island: 250-519-5510. Toll-free: 1-800-670-3322, ext. 5510.

Southern Interior: 250-712-3952. Toll-free: 1-800-563-7773, ext. 3952.