

23 July 2010

Dietitian prescribing of special foods approved

PHARMAC is pleased to announce the approval of a proposal to allow Dietitians to prescribe subsidised special foods and related products. This was the subject of a consultation letter dated 28 May 2010.

Details of the change

From 1 August 2010, the definition of 'Practitioner' in the Pharmaceutical Schedule will be amended to include registered Dietitians. This will enable Dietitians to prescribe subsidised products that are within their scope of practice. We have indicated in the Pharmaceutical Schedule those products that the Dietitians Board consider to be within a Dietitian's scope of practice, being special foods, vitamin products, mineral products and oral electrolyte replacement products.

Please note that Dietitians will not immediately be able to prescribe these products, as Dietitians will require individual accreditation by the Dietitians Board, and to have the role of prescribing included in their Annual Practising Certificate (APC), before they can prescribe special foods and related products. We understand that changes to APCs will begin to occur from 1 April 2011.

We note that we had also consulted on allowing Dietitians to submit Special Authority applications for any of the aforementioned products that require them. As we have separately consulted on changes to the Special Authority criteria for many special foods, and also to allow any vocationally registered general practitioner to submit initial applications, we intend to make decisions on all of these issues at the same time. We anticipate making a decision on this issue in the next few months.

Feedback received

We appreciate all of the feedback that we received and acknowledge the time people took to respond. All consultation responses were considered in their entirety in making a decision on the proposed changes. Most responses were supportive of the proposal, and the following issues were raised in relation to specific aspects of the proposal:

Theme	Comment
Respondents noted that training and competency assessments would be important for Dietitians wishing to prescribe.	PHARMAC notes that the training and competency assessments are the domain of the Dietitians Board, and have discussed these matters with them. We note that the Dietitians Board is intending to provide further training, and specifically accredit Dietitians before prescribing occurs.
Some respondents considered that the prescribing of injected products would be outside the skills and experience of a Dietitian.	As a 'scope of practice' issue, we referred this matter to the Dietitians Board. The Board agreed with these respondents, and as such we have excluded such products.

More information

If you have any questions about this decision, you can call our toll free number (9 am to 5 pm, Monday to Friday) on 0800 66 00 50.