

Changes to Copaxone

(glatiramer acetate)

– information for you

1. What changes will be happening?

There will be two changes:

1. There will be a change to the strength of your funded Copaxone which will mean fewer injections for people taking this medicine; and
2. There will be a change in how you receive your Copaxone. You will no longer receive your Copaxone via courier delivery and you will need to pick up your Copaxone from your pharmacy. This means Copaxone 40mg will be like any other medicine and you will need a prescription to collect it from your preferred pharmacy.

2. Why are the changes happening?

The supplier of Copaxone, Teva, will no longer be able to supply Copaxone 20 mg. PHARMAC is funding Copaxone 40 mg to ensure patients will continue to have access to funded Copaxone.

The change to how you receive your Copaxone means the way you access your medicine is the same as how all other people with MS receive their medicines. We consider that community pharmacists are best placed to have an overview of a patient's medicines.

3. When are the changes happening?

Between 1 February 2019 and 30 June 2019, you will need to change from Copaxone 20 mg prefilled syringe, to the Copaxone 40 mg prefilled syringe.

When you switch to Copaxone 40 mg you will no longer receive direct deliveries of your Copaxone. You will need to get a prescription and collect your Copaxone from your preferred pharmacy, just as you do for any other medicines.

You will continue to receive monthly deliveries of your Copaxone 20 mg until you change to Copaxone 40 mg.

4. Is there anything I need to do right now?

Yes – there are two things you need to do:

1. Please let us know the name and practice name/location of your GP and the pharmacy where you would like to pick up your Copaxone. This will help us to make sure that your GP and pharmacy are aware of the changes. Please email us this information as soon as possible to mstaccoordinator@pharmac.govt.nz. If you don't have email, you can call us on **0800 023 588**, and then press **option 1**.
2. Contact your hospital clinic soon to arrange switching to Copaxone 40 mg **before 30 June 2019**. Your hospital clinic will give you more information on how to get your prescriptions for Copaxone. Your hospital clinic may want you to collect the first prescription from them and may then move the prescribing to your GP.

5. Will there be any cost for me in getting my Copaxone?

Prescription costs

There will be no pharmacy prescription co-payment (usually \$5 per prescription item) for Copaxone 40 mg until 31 December 2019. After this, you will pay the usual prescription co-payment as you do for other medicines.

Some patients have told us that they pay a \$15 co-payment when they receive a prescription from their neurologist. If your neurologist is working for your DHB, the co-payment you pay should only be \$5.

Prescription subsidy

If you and your family get 20 or more prescription items in a year, you may be eligible for a prescription subsidy. This means once you have paid for 20 prescription items in a year, you do not have to pay any more prescription charges for the rest of that year.

Ask your pharmacist about this and they will be able to keep track of how many items you and your family have paid for.

You can find more information on the Ministry of Health website, www.health.govt.nz, search: prescription subsidy.

GP costs

If you visit your GP or health professional quite often, there may be some ways for your health costs to be reduced. We recommend you ask your doctor/nurse if you could qualify for the Care Plus programme next time you visit.

You can find more information on the Ministry of Health [website www.health.govt.nz](http://www.health.govt.nz), search: Care Plus.

6. Who will I get my Copaxone prescriptions from?

Please contact your hospital clinic to find out who will give you prescriptions for Copaxone. Your hospital clinic may want you to collect the first prescription from them and may then move the prescribing to your GP.

You will need to get a prescription for Copaxone every three months, but many GP's will write three-monthly repeat prescriptions without the need for an appointment and have a reduced fee for this service.

7. How often will I need to collect my medicine from the pharmacy?

Each prescription of Copaxone will provide three months' supply, but you will need to collect this monthly from your community pharmacy.

If you find it difficult to collect your Copaxone monthly due to mobility reasons or because you live a long way from your nearest pharmacy, it is possible to collect the entire three month's supply at once. Talk to your pharmacist about doing this.

8. What is the difference between Copaxone 20 mg and Copaxone 40 mg?

Copaxone 20mg and Copaxone 40mg contain a different dose of the same active ingredient – glatiramer acetate.

The main difference is the number of times each week that you will need to inject:
Copaxone 40mg is injected only three times a week with at least 48 hours apart for each injection.
Copaxone 20mg is injected daily.

You should talk to your doctor about when to inject your Copaxone.

SAMPLE SCHEDULE: 3-times-a-week DOSE

SUN.	MON.	TUES.	WED.	THUR.	FRI.	SAT.
	1		2		3	

9. How do I switch from Copaxone 20 mg to Copaxone 40 mg?

You will need to make an appointment with your hospital clinic or usual prescriber and they will talk you through how you will make the switch from Copaxone 20 mg to Copaxone 40 mg.

10. Does Copaxone 40 mg use the same injector device as Copaxone 20 mg?

Yes, Copaxone 20mg and Copaxone 40mg can be both used with the same injector device.

11. Do I have to change to Copaxone 40 mg?

To stay on Copaxone medicine, you will need to change from 20 mg to 40 mg prefilled syringes.

If you do not wish to change to Copaxone 40 mg, you may want to talk to your prescriber about whether other funded MS treatments are suitable for you.

12. Who do I contact if I have any other questions?

If you have any questions about your MS medicines and prescriptions for your MS medicines please talk to your neurologist or hospital clinic.

If you have any questions about how to get a prescription or delivery changes, you can contact email PHARMAC at mstacordinator@pharmac.govt.nz or call **0800 023 588 option 1**.

If you have any questions about obtaining replacement injectors, you can contact the supplier of Copaxone, Teva Pharma NZ on **0800 800 097** or enquiries@actavis.co.nz.