

Changes to how you receive Avonex and Betaferon

(Interferon beta-1-alpha and Interferon beta-1-beta)

— information for you

1. What changes will be happening?

There will be a change to how you receive your Avonex or Betaferon. From 1 July 2019 you will no longer receive your Avonex or Betaferon via courier delivery and you will need to pick up your Avonex or Betaferon from your pharmacy. This means Avonex and Betaferon 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?

- For people taking Avonex, you will receive an eight-week delivery of Avonex on 5 June 2019. This will be your last delivery of your Avonex.
- For people taking Betaferon, you will receive an eight-week delivery of Betaferon on 29 May 2019. This will be the last delivery of your Betaferon.

3. Why is the change happening?

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

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

Yes. Please email us at mstacordinator@pharmac.govt.nz as soon as possible to let us know:

1. the name and address of your GP; and the pharmacy where you would like to pick up your Avonex or Betaferon.
2. This will help us to make sure that your GP and pharmacy are aware of the changes.

If you don't have email, call us on **0800 023 588**, and then press **option 1**.

5. Will there be any cost for me in getting my Avonex or Betaferon from my pharmacy?

Pharmacy costs

No. There will be no pharmacy prescription co-payment (usually \$5 per prescription item) for Avonex and Betaferon 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 however, there will be no pharmacy prescription co-payment for Avonex and Betaferon until 31 December 2019.

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.

6. Who will I get my Avonex or Betaferon prescriptions from?

Please contact your hospital clinic to find out who will give you prescriptions for Avonex or Betaferon. 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 Avonex or Betaferon every three months. Your hospital clinic or your GP will be able to write these prescriptions. You might not need to make a face-to-face appointment to get these prescriptions.

You will still need an annual review with your neurologist to assess your eligibility for continued funded MS treatment.

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 next time you visit.

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

Your Avonex or Betaferon. will need to be collected from your pharmacy every month to pick up a month's supply of your treatment. Your prescription will need to be taken to your pharmacy at least two weeks before you run out of your Avonex or Betaferon as they may need to order stock in for you.

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

8. 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 the changes, please email mstacordinator@pharmac.govt.nz or call **0800 023 588**, and then press **option 1**.