

Media Release

The Hon Jacinta Allan MP
Premier



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PHARMACISTS DELIVERING ACCESSIBLE HEALTH CARE FOR VICTORIANS

The Allan Labor Government is delivering on its promise to improve access to health care for more Victorians, with community pharmacists able to provide treatment and advice for a range of common conditions from today.

Premier Jacinta Allan and Minister for Health Mary-Anne Thomas visited the Priceline Pharmacy in Gisborne to mark the start of a 12-month pilot that will give Victorians more choice about where and how they access basic primary care, especially for people struggling to access an affordable or bulk billing GP close to home.

Services include advice or treatment for women with uncomplicated urinary tract infections (UTIs) or a resupply of their existing contraceptive pill without needing a prescription – with a broader public health vaccination offering, travel health consultations and treatment for mild skin conditions to roll out in coming weeks and months.

Part of a \$20 million investment in the *Victorian Budget 2023/24*, around 400 pharmacies across the state have signed up for the pilot, with another 200 set to join the program in coming weeks. Pharmacies who have not yet joined are encouraged to still sign up, even as the pilot gets underway.

Importantly, Victorians won't be charged for a pharmacy consultation for UTIs, mild skin conditions or a resupply of the contraceptive pill – pharmacies may charge a fee for a travel health consultation and vaccinations, while the cost of medication will remain the same as a prescription from a GP.

To be eligible to participate, all pharmacists are required to successfully complete mandatory training in the piloted services and demonstrate they are well equipped to know if someone should be referred to a GP or hospital. They must also prove they have the appropriate facilities within the pharmacy, like a private consulting room.

The pilot is being guided by expert advisory and clinical groups representing Victorians and the pharmacy and medical professions, including the Pharmacy Guild of Australia, Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, and Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation.

At its conclusion, the pilot will be evaluated, and any recommendations will help inform longer-term decision making around the role of community pharmacists.

Following a decade of inaction in primary care from successive Federal Liberal governments, it is harder than it has ever been to access a GP – let alone one who bulk bills.

That is why the Allan Labor Government has stepped in, increasing primary care options for Victorians to free up GPs for people with more complex conditions and reduce non-urgent emergency department presentations – including 27 Priority Primary Care Centres and the Victorian Virtual Emergency Department.

Most pharmacies will have a variety of appointments and walk ins available – for more information, including a list of participating pharmacies visit betterhealth.vic.gov.au/services-support/community-pharmacist-pilot.

Quotes attributable to Premier Jacinta Allan

"We are getting on with delivering more primary care options for all Victorians, because basic health care should be accessible and affordable no matter where you live."

"Our pharmacists are already a trusted source for many Victorians – this pilot will expand their role providing more options for people needing quick medical advice for common ailments."

Media contact: Nadia Dimattina 0438 701 306 | nadia.dimattina@minstaff.vic.gov.au

Quotes attributable to Minister for Health Mary-Anne Thomas

“We know Victorians are eager for accessible and affordable primary care – with our Priority Primary Care Centres and Victorian Virtual Emergency Department managing more than 350,000 presentations combined to date.”

“With pharmacy consultation and prescribing already commonplace in many countries, we know it can provide a safe and affordable alternative for Victorians, while freeing up GPs for those with more urgent needs.”