

Thyroid Cancer Canada  
**Thyrogen® INFORMATION SHEET:**

Last Updated: September 2008

Increasingly, doctors are prescribing a drug called Thyrogen® (recombinant TSH) to prepare thyroid cancer patients for radioactive iodine (RAI) scanning, treatment and stimulated Thyroglobulin (Tg) testing.

The purpose of this document is to help patients locate current information on Thyrogen®, its use and cost coverage. The information contained in this document does not constitute medical advice. Readers are encouraged to work closely with their doctors to make sure that their individual medical needs are met. Sections in this information sheet include:

- What is Thyrogen®
- Cost-Coverage
- Status of Provincial Cost-Coverage of Thyrogen®
- Help to Navigate Through Drug Cost Coverage Options
- Pricing: Do Your Research Before Purchasing Thyrogen®

### **What is Thyrogen®**

Recombinant Thyroid Stimulating Hormone (TSH), known by the trade name of **Thyrogen®**.

Thyrogen® replaces the need to have patients withdraw from their thyroid hormone replacement, a process that normally takes at least six weeks. Thyrogen® is fast-acting, but requires two visits to your doctor for injections. Patients are typically given two doses by injection on a Monday and Tuesday, having their test-dose RAI on Wednesday. The scan and bloodwork for Tg testing are done on Friday. Most patients have fewer side effects from Thyrogen® and are delighted to avoid going hypothyroid.

A Thyrogen® Kit contains two small containers of Thyrogen® that must be mixed with sterile water prior to intramuscular injection by your doctor. Sterile water is NOT included in the kit and must be provided by your pharmacist. Before leaving the pharmacy with your Thyrogen®, ask to make sure that sterile water has been added to your order.

Thyrogen® is the subject of ongoing medical research, which will help define the various applications for this product in the overall management of thyroid cancer.

For more product information, please consult these links:

Thyrogen® Product Information Sheet by Genzyme, manufacturers of Thyrogen  
<http://www.thyrogen.com/global/pi.pdf>

Recombinant TSH (Thyrogen®) by Dr. Daniel Drucker MD  
<http://www.mythyroid.com/tsh.html>

Understanding Thyrogen® by Genzyme, the manufacturers of Thyrogen  
[http://www.thyrogen.com/patient/resources/docs/Understanding\\_Thyrogen.pdf](http://www.thyrogen.com/patient/resources/docs/Understanding_Thyrogen.pdf)

Genzyme Canada Thyroid Update – Includes Schedule of Patient Forums  
<http://www.thyroidupdate.ca/>

## **Cost-Coverage**

One of the challenges a patient faces is trying to understand which drugs are covered by the government, special drug programs or private insurance.

In Canada, provinces determine whether or not a drug is covered under government programs, and define the terms of coverage. Many provinces have approved full cost-coverage for Thyrogen® and the status of cost-coverage per province is described in the next section of this information sheet.

If your province of residence does not cover the cost of Thyrogen®, you may have cost-coverage with your private health insurance program. You will need to provide your insurer with the Drug Insurance Number (DIN) for Thyrogen® and ask if your policy covers the cost. You may need to complete a special form, as required by your insurer to determine coverage.

The Drug Insurance Number (DIN) for Thyrogen® is **02246016**.

## **Status of Provincial Cost-Coverage of Thyrogen®**

**British Columbia** - Full cost coverage is approved under the British Columbia Cancer Agency.

**Alberta** - The Alberta drug plan has determined that coverage is the responsibility of individual hospital or the Cancer Agency.

**Saskatchewan** - Full cost coverage under the Provincial Cancer Agency. Radiation oncologists make a special access request to the cancer centre.

**Manitoba** - Full cost coverage is approved under Manitoba Cancer Care. The request must be made by a specialist.

**Ontario** - Thyrogen® is only covered under the Ontario Drug Benefits Program (ODB)  
- Limited Use. If you belong to one of the following groups of Ontario residents and you have valid Ontario Health Insurance (OHIP), you may be eligible for drug coverage under the ODB Program :

- people 65 years of age and older;
- residents of long -term care facilities;
- residents of Homes for Special Care;
- people receiving professional services under the Home Care program;
- Trillium Drug Program recipients.;
- In addition, if you are receiving social assistance (the Ontario Works program or the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP)), you are eligible for ODB coverage.

**Quebec** - The Quebec drug plan has determined that coverage is the responsibility of individual hospitals. Thyrogen® is listed in the formulary for hospitals or health institutions. The listing comes with the criterion that it is for patients who are intolerant to withdrawal or where withdrawal is contraindicated.

**Newfoundland** - Full cost coverage through hospitals.

**Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island** (Atlantic Committee) – The Atlantic Common Drug Review Process has recommended full coverage. Individual provinces will consider patient specific requests.

**Territories** - Fully covered on request

**First Nations** - Fully covered as an NIHB benefit.

**Other federal programs: Department of National Defence, Veterans Affairs Canada, Corrections Canada, RCMP** - Fully covered benefit.

### **Help to Navigate Through Drug Cost Coverage Options**

The manufacturers of Thyrogen,® Genzyme Canada, have set up a **Helpline** to assist patients in with determining if the drug is covered by your insurance plan, and how to go about being reimbursed. Ontario also provides assistance in determining the cost-coverage options though the **Cancer Drug Assistance Program of Cancer Care Ontario**. Information on both services are described below.

#### **Thyrogen® Reimbursement Helpline**

The manufacturer of Thyrogen®, Genzyme Canada Inc., has set up a helpline to assist with determining if the drug is covered by your insurance plan, and how to go about being reimbursed.

The number to call is: 1-866-401-8323

The Thyrogen® Reimbursement Helpline is open from 8:00 am until 8:00 pm EST. Monday through Friday.

#### **For Ontario residents only:**

#### **Cancer Drug Assistance Program, Cancer Care Ontario**

<http://www.cancercare.on.ca/english/home/toolbox/drugs/ndfp/cdap/>

Cancer Care Ontario's Cancer Drug Assistance Program (CDAP) helps patients find opportunities for reimbursement for costly cancer treatments. This bilingual pilot program does not provide direct reimbursement to patients, but rather provides information and advice to patients and their families about drug coverage options.

CDAP's toll-free support lines are answered by specially trained nurses. CDAP operates on regular business days, Monday to Friday from 8am to 8pm EST. Contact CDAP by phone or fax.

Phone: 1-877-681-6551 – verbal consent required

Fax: 1-877-681-6552 – written consent required

A third-party translation service is available for special cases, in over 120 languages.

### **Pricing: Do Your Research Before Purchasing Thyrogen®**

The following information may save you some money if you have to buy Thyrogen, or pay for a percentage of it under your insurance plan. The consumer cost of Thyrogen® can vary by over \$172.00 per kit, depending upon where you buy it.

**Genzyme Canada Inc.** sells Thyrogen® for \$1324.00

Some pharmacies buy it from wholesalers, who mark it up by approximately 5.5%, thereby making the cost to the pharmacy \$1396.82

Then the pharmacy can take a 10-20% mark up.

With a 10% mark up – the cost of Thyrogen® is \$1536.51 plus a dispensing fee of 10.99 = \$1547.49

If the pharmacy has a 20% mark up – the cost of Thyrogen® is \$1676.18 + 10.99 dispensing fee = \$1687.17.

Ontario does not cover the cost of Thyrogen® under the provincial health plan. Here are some specific Ontario examples of the consumer price differences, surveyed September 2008 (costs include drug retail price and pharmacy dispensing fee):

Mount Sinai Hospital Pharmacy - Toronto - \$1456.40

Shoppers Drug Mart – Guelph – Silvercreek Parkway - \$1505.99

Shoppers Drug Mart - Downtown Toronto - Queens Quay - \$1534.59

Walmart Pharmacy - Etobicoke - \$1545.47

DRUGstore Pharmacy – Guelph - Silvercreek Parkway - \$1560.00

IDA Pharmacy, Scarborough - \$1628.32

In these few examples, the price varies by as much as \$ 172.00

#### **Lesson:**

If you need to purchase Thyrogen®, call pharmacies and ask what you will be charged BEFORE you decide where you will buy it. Thyrogen® is becoming much more widely available and more pharmacies are either stocking it or have quick access to it.

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