

# Medicines & Poisons Information Sheet

## Dispensing Medicines for Pharmacists

This document provides a general overview of key elements for dispensing prescriptions in the NT.

### Categories of prescribers

Medical practitioners, dentists and veterinarians are authorised to write prescriptions in the NT within the scope of their practice. In addition, nurse practitioners, endorsed midwives, optometrists and podiatrists may issue prescriptions where they have been endorsed to do so by AHPRA.

It is legal to supply Schedule 4 and Schedule 8 medicines from prescriptions issued by these health practitioners.

### Prescription requirements

Regulations 8 and 10 and the S8 Code of Practice outline the requirements for prescriptions issued by health practitioners. A key element is that S8 prescriptions in the NT must include:

- the patient's DOB on the prescription
- only **one** S8 medicine per prescription and no S4 medicines
- the quantity must be written in words and numbers – eg 10 (ten)

### Electronic prescriptions

The NT allows the electronic transfer of prescriptions for all Schedule 4 and Schedule 8 medicines in accordance with the *Electronic Transactions (Northern Territory) Act 2000*.

This means faxed/emailed copies of prescriptions can be treated as valid prescriptions in their own right and the original does not need to be provided to the pharmacy.

Compliance with the Electronic Transactions Act means ensuring the integrity of the information being transferred. This means the prescriber should directly email/fax the pharmacy and the original paper prescription should be retained, transferred to the pharmacy or destroyed as appropriate.

Paper prescriptions that are emailed/faxed to the pharmacy should not be given to the patient.

Use of ePrescribing systems is permitted in the NT for both Schedule 4 and Schedule 8 medicines with no additional regulation.

### Interstate prescriptions

Most Schedule 8 (Controlled Drug) prescriptions written by an interstate prescriber can be dispensed in the Northern Territory, provided the pharmacist follows the requirements of regulation 7A of the Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Regulations. This states for unrestricted Schedule 8 medicines (Morphine, Tapentadol, Oxycodone ect) that pharmacists:

- Verify the identity of the person presenting the prescription

† Pharmacists should be aware of their requirements under the PBS for retention of original copies and patient receipt of PBS benefits

- Verify that the prescription is valid i.e. that it is genuine, the prescriber is genuine, and that it contains all the mandatory requirements for the category of prescription

Additionally for Restricted Schedule 8 medicines that are stimulants (dexamfetamine, lisdexamfetamine, methylphenidate):

- Verify the prescriber is a specialist normally permitted to initiate therapy in the NT (paediatricians, psychiatrists, neurologists, physicians)  
*note; prescriber qualifications can be verified via the AHPRA website or the qualifications on the prescription (if written)*

Prescriptions by interstate GP's for simulants remain invalid in the NT

Prescriptions for Opioid Pharmacotherapy (methadone liquid, Subutex<sup>R</sup>, Suboxone<sup>R</sup>, Buvidal<sup>R</sup>) remain invalid in the NT

## Length of validity of prescription

Section 88(a) of the MPTGA states that S4 prescriptions are **valid for 12 months** and S8 prescriptions are valid for **6 (six) months**, unless the Code of Practice stipulates a different period. This includes prescriptions for stimulants (dexamfetamine, lisdexamfetamine, methylphenidate).

The Code of Practice states that prescriptions for the restricted S8 substances methadone liquid (5mg/mL), buprenorphine (Subutex), buprenorphine/naloxone (Suboxone) and buprenorphine depot injection (Buvidal<sup>®</sup>, Sublocade<sup>®</sup>, are **valid for 3 (three) months**.

This applies to paper and electronic prescriptions.

## No self-prescription for Schedule 8 medicines

Prescribers in the Northern Territory are not permitted to prescribe Schedule 8 medicines for themselves. Pharmacists are not permitted to dispense these prescriptions.

## Dispensing Monitored Medicines

Pharmacists dispensing prescriptions for Monitored Medicines are required to check NTScript prior to supplying the medicine. The decision to supply or not remains entirely a clinical decision made between pharmacists, prescribers and patients.

## More support

For further information please contact:

Medicines & Poisons

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