

Pharmacy Update – COVID-19, 25 March 2020

In this update

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- Update on ePrescribing
- Update from WA Health Medicines and Poisons Regulation Branch (Salbutamol inhalers, hydroxychloroquine, face masks for pharmacy staff, staged supply of S8 medicines)

Surgical masks can no longer be collected and will instead be posted

To assist busy pharmacies and to reduce the risk of community transmission of COVID-19, all surgical mask distribution is now occurring via Australia Post. **PLEASE DO NOT COME TO COLLECT MASKS.**

We appreciate supplies within some pharmacies are running low and we are doing our utmost to expedite this process.

We can confirm that all outstanding orders as of Tuesday 24 March will be posted this week, with one box of 50 surgical masks allocated per pharmacy. All subsequent orders will be delivered as soon as is practicable.

[Complete the online form](#) to request your mask allocation.

Instructions for use

Due to an ongoing shortage of masks, we appreciate your cooperation and compliance with the following instructions.

Surgical masks are only to be used:

- For the protection of health professionals and practice/pharmacy staff in direct contact with people presenting with fever and/or respiratory symptoms including cough, sore throat and/or shortness of breath
- For provision to people who are suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19, for the protection of other patients and staff, and of the public while the patient returns home.

If the client meets the above criteria you should ask the client to don a mask and also wear a mask yourself. Please find instructions for putting on and removing a mask here:

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public/when-and-how-to-use-masks>

Due to the ongoing worldwide shortage we suggest that the same staff member remain with the client, so multiple mask use is not required for each client.

The masks are not intended for wider use by staff when not assessing a client, or to be sold or supplied to clients, due to the aforementioned limited supply.



Further information on mask distribution

We can only supply masks to pharmacies, general practices and Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations at this time, following the direction of the Australian Government Department of Health.

All queries about the mask distribution should be directed to Practice Assist on [1800 227 747](tel:1800227747) or practiceassist@wapha.org.au for further assistance, or read our [FAQs](#)

Update on ePrescribing

The Australian Government will fast track the implementation of electronic prescribing to help protect people most at-risk in our community from exposure to COVID-19.

ePrescriptions provide the ability for clinicians to prepare an electronic script, potentially via a telehealth consultation. This is then shared with the pharmacy who may then choose to deliver medicines directly where suitable, thereby reducing the risk of exposure for vulnerable patients.

The Australian Digital Health Agency is currently working with software providers to implement this function and will provide further updates in the coming weeks. ePrescribing works with eRX and MediSecure.

WA Primary Health Alliance and the Australian Digital Health Agency will support practices and pharmacies to implement ePrescribing in clinical practice, when available.

Pharmacy Shared Medicines List

[The Pharmacy Shared Medicines list](#) has been successfully trialed and is available for use within pharmacies using Webstercare.

By creating a Shared Medicines list, pharmacies are able to upload a list of all known medications - whether prescribed, over the counter or complimentary - to the My Health Record. Once uploaded, the Shared Medicines list can be viewed by the individual and other health professionals involved in their care at point of contact, including Emergency Departments and Urgent Care Clinics.

WA Primary Health Alliance, alongside the Australian Digital Health Agency, will be supporting the rollout of the Pharmacy Shared Medicines List and will shortly be contacting pharmacies to begin this process.

Further support

If you have any questions on either initiative, or for support with any My Health Record queries, please contact the My Health Record team at WA Primary Health Alliance via myhealthrecord@wapha.org.au

WA Department of Health Salbutamol inhalers, hydroxychloroquine, face masks for pharmacy staff, staged supply of S8 medicines

The Medicines and Poisons Regulation Branch wishes to thank pharmacists for continuing to provide essential primary healthcare services to patients across Western Australia. The following information is provided to support pharmacists in their efforts to provide safe, professional services to consumers.

Salbutamol inhalers (Ventolin, Asmol, Airomir)

The **Schedule 3 entry in the Poisons Standard (SUSMP)** was updated on 24 March 2020 and now limits over-the-counter supply. Pharmacies may now only supply in S3 for:

- a person that can provide evidence of a medically diagnosed lung condition or previous supply by the pharmacy; or
- PBS Doctor's Bag order or other written order from a health professional authorised to use or supply salbutamol; or
- use in providing first aid in a school, childcare centre or similar setting.

OTC supply of salbutamol remains limited to ONE inhaler per person. Pharmacists are advised to record supply in their dispensing system and label the inhaler with a dispensing label.

Schedule 3 medicines may only be supplied by the pharmacist when satisfied there is a genuine therapeutic need. The Pharmacy Board of Australia [guidelines](#) outline appropriate practices for Schedule 3 medicines.

Hydroxychloroquine (Plaquenil)

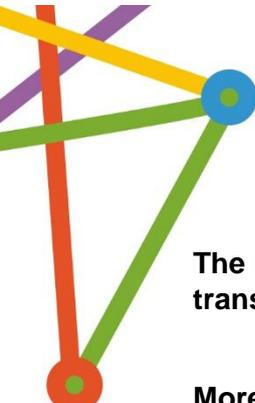
There is national concern about the prescribing of hydroxychloroquine for COVID-19. This has resulted in difficulties for patients under routine treatment for rheumatoid arthritis, immunological and dermatological conditions. There are now [restrictions on prescribing](#) of hydroxychloroquine. **For patients commencing hydroxychloroquine, treatment must be initiated by a specialist medical practitioner such as a dermatologist, physician or paediatric/child-health specialist, or by a dental practitioner with specialist 'oral medicine' registration.** For patients already under treatment with hydroxychloroquine there is no change, and the usual prescriber can continue to write prescriptions.

Staged supply of Schedule 8 medicines

Pharmacies are encouraged to consider and reduce any non-essential activities, wherever possible. The Department has received queries about Schedule 8 medicines and the need for continuing any requirements for staged supply. In these cases, prescribing authorisation from the Department may be dependent on such requirements, which are deemed necessary for patient safety. Such arrangements are not to be altered without first contacting the prescriber.

Signing of prescriptions

The signing of prescriptions, to indicate receipt, is a Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) requirement. The PBS has not yet released a decision regarding signing of prescriptions.



The Department strongly suggests pharmacists consider how best to minimise virus transmission in this setting and take appropriate measures.

More information

- Advice for pharmacists from the [Pharmacy Guild](#) and [Pharmaceutical Society](#)
- [WA Health](#) guidance on COVID-19
- TGA information on [Shortages](#)
- Commonwealth Government [COVID-19](#) information
- [Public and Industry Resources](#)

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