



Advice for pharmacists supplying medicines to patients during the COVID-19 public health state of emergency

The following arrangements apply for supply of prescription medicines from a pharmacy for patients who are unable to obtain prescriptions due to disruption caused by COVID-19.

A temporary, special authority extending continued dispensing provisions has been issued by the WA Chief Health Officer. This permits supply of Schedule 4 prescription medicines from a pharmacy in WA in circumstances where a patient does not have a current prescription. The authority is in place until 31 May 2020 and will be reviewed and extended, as needed, in response to the COVID-19 crisis.

The existing arrangements for emergency supply of Schedule 4 and Schedule 8 medicines using telephone or electronic directions remain in place and are encouraged to be used by prescribers and pharmacists, as necessary.

Special authority for emergency supply of Schedule 4 medicines during COVID-19

A pharmacist may dispense a supply of any Schedule 4 medication, without a prescription, where the pharmacist is satisfied that:

- there is an immediate need and it is for a current, essential treatment;
- the supply is continuation of a previously prescribed medication; and
- it is impracticable for the patient to obtain a prescription.

The quantity to be supplied is no more than:

- for a Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) item, the standard maximum PBS quantity; or
- for a non-PBS medicine, the smallest standard pack size.

The pharmacist must record:

- patient's name and address;
- name, strength and quantity of the medicine;
- directions for use of the medicine as determined by the pharmacist;
- name and address of the authorised practitioner who last prescribed that medicine;
- date of supply;
- a unique reference number; and
- name of the pharmacist by whom the medicine was supplied.

The medicine must be labelled in the same way as any dispensed medicine.

Schedule 8 medicines are NOT included in the temporary special authority

This authority is issued under Western Australian legislation and is separate to any Commonwealth instruments covering funding and claiming for PBS items during emergency supply. Pharmacists should ensure they are familiar with relevant PBS rules and [special authorities](#) at www.pbs.gov.au.

See also PSA [Guidelines for the Continued Dispensing of eligible prescribed medicines by pharmacists](#)

Dispensing of Schedule 4 and Schedule 8 medicines using telephone or email directions in an emergency

For any situation of emergency supply that may not be covered by the special authority, pharmacists are reminded that they may supply a Schedule 4 or Schedule 8 medicine, in the absence of a prescription where they are in receipt of a:

- verbal direction from a prescriber; or
- electronic direction (fax or other means), such as a copy of a prescription, from the prescriber.

In these cases, the prescriber must dispatch the written prescription to the pharmacy within 24 hours. Prescriptions for emergency supply must be sent directly to the pharmacy and not given to patients.

If a valid prescription is not received within 5 working days, the pharmacist should inform the Department of Health.

Pharmacists must label the medicine and make a record of the supply as usual.

Where emergency supply may be required, the contact with a prescriber to receive this direction may be initiated by either the prescriber or pharmacist.

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