

Telehealth Prescribing

The Australian Government is fast-tracking implementation of electronic prescribing (ePrescribing) as part of its COVID-19 National Health Plan. The Australian Government aims to reach up to 80 per cent of general practices and community pharmacies by May 2020.

Electronic prescriptions are enabled by ACT legislation¹.

As an interim measure, to support telehealth services, the Australian Government has enabled the dispensing and claiming of pharmaceutical benefits using a digital image (photo, scanned copy or pdf) of the prescription.

Under the Australian Government interim arrangements², the dispensing and claiming of pharmaceutical benefits using a digital image are allowed, including:

- A digital image (photo, scanned copy or pdf) of the entire prescription sent to the patient's pharmacy of choice directly from the prescriber via email or text message (**Digital Image Prescriptions**), or
- A copy of the entire prescription sent to the patient's pharmacy of choice directly from the prescriber via fax (**Faxed Prescriptions**).

Further information about the Australian Government interim prescribing arrangements for [prescribers](#) and [pharmacists](#) are available via these links.

Telephone (verbal) prescriptions are also enabled by ACT legislation¹. An original written prescription must be sent to the pharmacy within 24 hours of being given verbally. Written includes in electronic form. Telephone prescriptions are not claimable under the Australian Government interim arrangements.

The supply of schedule 4 (prescription only) Appendix D and schedule 8 (controlled) medicines using electronic, digital image, fax or telephone prescriptions is enabled under ACT legislation¹.

It is critical that prescribers send prescriptions directly to the patient's pharmacy and have the necessary ACT standing or Chief Health Officer approval in place in order to mitigate risk of diversion or duplicate dispensing of Appendix D or schedule 8 medicines that may be subject to abuse or misuse.

Prescribers and pharmacists are also reminded to use the DORA real time prescription monitoring website to support patient care for those requiring treatment with a controlled medicine. Further information about ACT DORA is available [here](#).

¹ Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Regulation 2008

² National Health (COVID-19 Supply of Pharmaceutical Benefits) Special Arrangement 2020 and National Health (COVID-19 Supply of Pharmaceutical Benefits) Amendment (Expansion of Telehealth and Telephone Attendances) Special Arrangement 2020)

Digital Image Prescriptions

Digital image prescriptions transmitted electronically are enabled by ACT legislation¹.

A digital image prescription must be sent from the prescriber directly to the patient's pharmacy of choice. Digital image prescriptions should never be given directly to the patient.

Under ACT and Australian Government interim arrangements, prescribers are not required to send a printed paper prescription to the pharmacy. The Australian Government interim arrangements require a prescriber to retain the prescription for at least 2 years.

Prescribers should also obtain and record patient's consent to send the prescriptions electronically.

Please note that the PBS and RPBS interim arrangements are only for prescriptions written as a result of telehealth attendance or phone attendance provided on or after 20 March 2020. The PBS and RPBS interim arrangements are temporary and will cease in accordance with the COVID-19 National Health Plan which is currently scheduled to cease on 30 September 2020.

Faxed Prescriptions

The PBS and RPBS interim arrangements and ordinary arrangements³ allow pharmacists to supply pharmaceutical benefits from a copy of prescription sent via fax.

Faxed prescriptions are also enabled by ACT legislation¹. ACT pharmacists may claim for pharmaceutical benefits supplied on a faxed prescription according to the PBS and RPBS interim arrangements.

ACT regulation requires **ACT prescribers to send the original prescription to the pharmacy within 24 hours** of sending it via fax⁴.

Pharmacists are also required to notify the Pharmaceutical Services Section of the Health Protection Service (on behalf of the Chief Health Officer), in writing, if they fail to receive the original prescription of a faxed prescription within 7 days of dispensing of the prescription⁵. Notifications may be sent to pss@act.gov.au or via fax 02 5124 9309.

³ National Health (Pharmaceutical Benefits) Regulations 2017

⁴ Section 31 of Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Regulation 2008

⁵ Section 120(g) of Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Regulation 2008

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