

Pharmacist quick reference guide: Implementing the NSW Opioid Treatment Program (Long-Acting Injectable Buprenorphine)

Be at the forefront of providing an essential service to your community and build on your professional scope of practice.

Long-acting Injectable Buprenorphine (LAIB) offers a flexible option, allows consumer autonomy, and helps normalise access to opioid dependence treatment.

Interested in learning about oral and sublingual options?

QR code to: Pharmacist quick reference guide: implementing the NSW opioid treatment program (oral and sublingual).



Step 1: Prepare yourself

To administer LAIB, pharmacists must be current, accredited immunisers. Complete [accredited immunisation training here](#).

Essential training

- complete the [NSW long-acting injectable buprenorphine administration by pharmacists' course](#) (free for NSW Pharmacists)

Recommended training

- complete the [NSW OTP: Foundation training course for pharmacists](#) (free for NSW Pharmacists)
- complete the [Administering medicines by injection course before administering any medicine by injection](#).
- be familiar, and practice in accordance with the [PSA Guidelines for pharmacists administering medicines by injection](#).

Build trusting and respectful relationships with people accessing LAIB

- **Choose your words wisely.** Healthcare professionals must actively use language that minimises stigma, as words can significantly impact patients' feelings of safety and acceptance.
- **Understand the consequences of the words you use.** Stigmatising language and actions can deter individuals from seeking necessary services, leading to negative health, wellbeing, employment, and social outcomes.
- **Review and improve your practices.** Create a more inclusive and supportive environment by regularly reviewing your practices to identify and eliminate stigmatising behaviours. Examples include separate entrances or unequal waiting times.

Useful resources:

- [Language Matters](#)
- Adopt the [AOD Care Charter](#) in your pharmacy

Step 2: Prepare your pharmacy and all pharmacy staff

Register your pharmacy as an OTP dosing point with the NSW Ministry of Health.

Pharmacists must complete an application to become a registered Opioid Treatment Program (OTP) dosing point. [Register here](#).

PRACTICE POINT: Pharmacies can choose to provide LAIB without providing other OTP medicines (e.g. methadone, SL buprenorphine).

Essential requirements for the pharmacy

Pharmacies must be approved to supply pharmaceutical benefits under section 90 of the National Health Act 1953.

- Pharmacies must comply with the relevant legislation. [Community pharmacists and the NSW Opioid Treatment Program](#)
- The pharmacy must have a private consultation room and use equipment that complies with the [NSW pharmacist vaccination standards](#).
- Pharmacists must develop policies and procedures for your LAIB professional service. This is a mandatory requirement of the Quality Care Pharmacy Program (QCPP).

Essential resources for the pharmacist

Pharmacists must be familiar with treatment guidelines and supporting resources:

- [Opioid dependence treatment: clinical guidance and tools for clinicians](#)
- [Community pharmacists and the NSW opioid treatment program](#)
- [Pharmacy and patient agreement form for OTP](#)

Additional considerations for my pharmacy

When preparing your pharmacy to implement the LAIB service, you may want to consider the following.

Consultation room set-up

- Is there a suitable waiting area for monitoring people post-injection?
- Is a freezer available to store the icepacks which may be used to numb the area prior to injection?
- Are there suitable bed and seating options available – positioning depends on formulation and person preference.

Medicine storage

- Is your safe big enough? Consider the size of LAIB boxes, and number of people accessing LAIB, noting you will need to keep stock on hand
 - One LAIB product (Sublocade) requires refrigeration for long-term storage but can be stored in a room temperature safe for a period of up to 12 weeks prior to use (or discard). Plan your stock management processes and determine if an approved refrigerated safe will be required.
- Storage of the refrigerated LAIB products MUST comply with the NSW Health guidance: [Storage of a Schedule 8 medicine \(drug of addiction\) requiring refrigeration](#)

Step 2: Prepare your pharmacy and all pharmacy staff – continued

Stock ordering

To set up your account to be able to order LAIB, contact:

Buvidal - australia@camurus.com and/or Sublocade - sublocadeorders@indivior.com

Consider software that streamlines your service

Specific software is not a requirement however, OTP management software can:

- save time on administrative tasks
- integrate with dispensing software and the PPA Portal for claiming
- support regulatory compliance, medication safety and appropriate clinical documentation
- simplify and support dose planning and stock management

Software designs vary and specific features may be more suited to your pharmacy and OTP service. An approved drug register and subsidiary drug register may also be used.

Available software vendors (in alphabetical order) include:

- iDose
- Modeus
- ScriptSoft
- StrongRoom AI

Step 3: Service implementation

Accessing payments

- [Register here](#) for the ODT injection claim through the PPA portal. This payment is in addition to PBS dispensing fees.
- [Register](#) for incentive payments for participating in the NSW OTP, which has specific incentives for pharmacies newly administering LAIB.

Programs to support you to deliver this service

- **SafeScript NSW:** provides real-time information about a person's prescribing and dispensing history for certain high-risk medicines at the time of dosing to support clinical decision making and patient safety. [Register here](#).
- **NSW Health Take Home Naloxone (THN) program:** discuss and offer free THN to people accessing medicines under the NSW OTP, including family, friends and carers. Pharmacies are reimbursed for the cost of naloxone, plus the dispense fee through PPA. [Register here](#). Not sure how to have these conversations? Check out the [Opioid Safety Toolkit](#).
- **Needle & Syringe Program (NSP):** minimise transmission of blood borne viruses amongst people who inject drugs. [Register here](#).

Who else could you engage with?

- Organise a meeting or phone call with your local GP Clinics and Aboriginal Medical Service to establish communication and referral pathways.
- Contact your [Local Health District \(LHD\) Alcohol and Other Drug Service](#) and let them know of the services you are providing.

PRACTICE POINT: As well as administering LAIB, pharmacists can dispense LAIB for delivery to medical clinics for administration.

Prior to supply, establish written supply arrangements with any practitioner to whom LAIB is delivered.

Remember: LAIB must **never** be supplied to, or collected by, a patient or their carer.

Where to go for additional support?

- The **prescriber** is always the first point of contact if any aspect of care is not certain or if there are any concerns about safety.
- [Drug & Alcohol Specialist Advisory Service \(DASAS\)](#) - call: 1800 023 687 to access rapid clinical support 24/7.
- [Pharmacist to Pharmacist Advice Line](#) – call: 1300 369 772 or email: p2padvice@psa.org.au. Offered by PSA, and available to all NSW pharmacists for practice-related queries, advice and support on LAIB or other medicines under the NSW OTP.
- For regulatory questions, contact the Pharmaceutical Services Unit (PSU) via the [online enquiry form](#).
- Join the **NSW Health/Pharmacy Guild Community of Practice**, to hear about program updates, share ideas, local solutions and concerns about providing the OTP in community pharmacies. E-mail healthservices@nsw.guild.org.au to join.

Pharmacists can also **refer** people who are accessing OTP to the following services for further support:

- [The Opioid Treatment Line \(OTL\)](#) - provides opioid pharmacotherapy information, referrals, advice and a forum for pharmacotherapy concerns. Call: 1800 642 428, available 9:30am to 5:00pm, Monday to Friday (except public holidays).
- [NUAA Peerline](#) - is a confidential peer run telephone service providing support to people who use drugs, who are on the opioid treatment program or who are seeking treatment across NSW. Call: 1800 644 413 or email: peerline@nuaa.org.au.
- [Alcohol and Drug Information Service \(ADIS\) NSW](#) - free and confidential counselling helpline for those in NSW with concerns around alcohol or drug misuse. Call: 1800 250 115 or webchat, available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Step 4: Reflect on your practice

How can I continually improve my own practice and my pharmacy's service?

- Seek feedback from people accessing LAIB, prescribers and staff on how your service could be improved.
- Plan regular professional development to maintain your scope of practice and ensure delivery of a high-quality service.
- Go to [NSW Opioid Treatment Program \(OTP\) – Foundation training and support](#) to explore different education offerings
- Regularly talk about LAIB, THN and NSP at staff meetings to appropriately upskill your staff in OTP service delivery.

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