

# Pharmacist quick reference guide: Implementing the NSW Opioid Treatment Program (oral and sublingual)

The NSW Opioid Treatment Program (OTP) helps people reduce or moderate their non-prescribed opioid use by providing them with a regular dose of a long-acting opioid, also known as Opioid Dependence Treatment (ODT). These medications work to prevent withdrawal and reduce cravings. The NSW OTP seeks to reduce the social, economic and health harms associated with opioid use.

## Interested in learning about Long-Acting Injectable Buprenorphine (LAIB)?

Pharmacist Quick Reference Guide: Implementing the NSW Opioid Treatment Program (LAIB)



## Step 1: Prepare yourself

### Essential training

Complete the [NSW Opioid Treatment Program \(OTP\): Foundation training course for pharmacists](#) (free for NSW pharmacists).

### Build trusting and respectful relationships with people accessing OTP

- **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](#) to register.

More information is available here: [How to become a registered OTP pharmacy](#).

### 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. More information here: [Community pharmacists and the NSW Opioid Treatment Program](#)
- Pharmacists must develop policies and procedures for your NSW OTP 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](#)

Available software vendors (in alphabetical order) include:

- iDose, • Modeus, • ScriptSoft, • StrongRoom AI

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.

### Additional considerations for my pharmacy

When preparing your pharmacy to implement the OTP, you may want to consider the following:

#### Workflow management

How can you provide this service in your pharmacy in a way that manages workflow, but is also discreet?

When preparing or administering OTP, maintain a distraction-free environment by using an area where you can prevent interruptions from other tasks, phone calls, staff, or patients.

#### Medicine storage

Is your safe big enough? Consider the size of 1L methadone bottle, including a pump.

#### Equipment and consumables

Consider and order equipment and consumables you will need, including plastic cups and takeaway bottles/boxes/bags (available from pharmacy wholesalers) and any dosing equipment such as methadone pumps (dispensers).

See [Community Pharmacy Dosing Protocol](#) for takeaway bottle (methadone) and takeaway box/bag (buprenorphine) requirements.

#### 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

## Step 3: Service implementation

### Accessing payments

Register [here](#) for the ODT Staged Supply Claim through the PPA portal. This payment is in addition to PBS dispensing fees.

Access additional incentive payments for participating in the NSW OTP. [Register here](#).

### 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):** aims to minimise the 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 the [LHD Drug and Alcohol intake lines](#) for your Local Health District (LHD) Alcohol and other drug service and let them know of the services you are providing.

### Where to go for additional support?

- The **prescriber** is always the first point of contact for a pharmacist if any aspect of care is not certain or if the pharmacist has 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](mailto:p2padvice@psa.org.au). Offered by PSA, and available to all NSW pharmacists for practice-related queries, advice and support on 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](mailto: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](mailto: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. The prescriber is always the first point of contact for a pharmacist if any aspect of care is not certain or if the pharmacist has any concerns about safety.

## Step 4: Reflect on your practice

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

- Reflect on your practice by completing a self-audit 6-monthly.
  - Access the [self-audit](#) for community pharmacies providing OTP service and the [webinar](#) on how to conduct a self-audit
- Seek feedback from people accessing OTP, prescribers and staff on how your service could be improved. This could be via formal or informal surveys.
- 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 OTP, THN and NSP at staff meetings to appropriately upskill your staff in OTP service delivery.

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