Pharmaceutical Society of Australia

Overview of Electronic Prescriptions

Electronic Prescription
YOUR MEDICINE
TAB 100MG 28 - QTY
Date 22 April 2025
4 supplies remaining

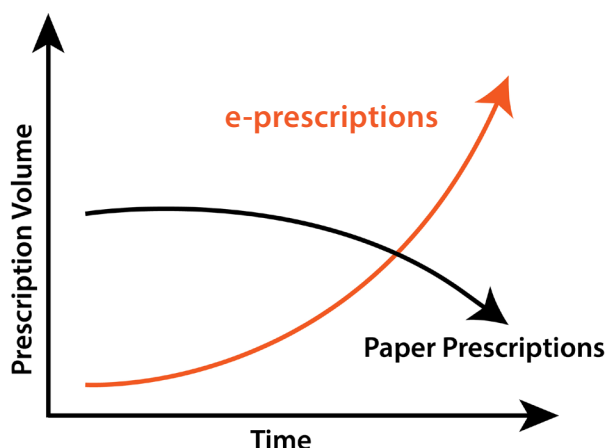## What is an electronic prescription

Electronic prescriptions / e-prescriptions are digital versions of a prescription. It allows prescriptions to be sent to a patient or pharmacy via a 'token'.

This system improves the safety, accuracy, efficiency and convenience for prescribers, patients and pharmacists.
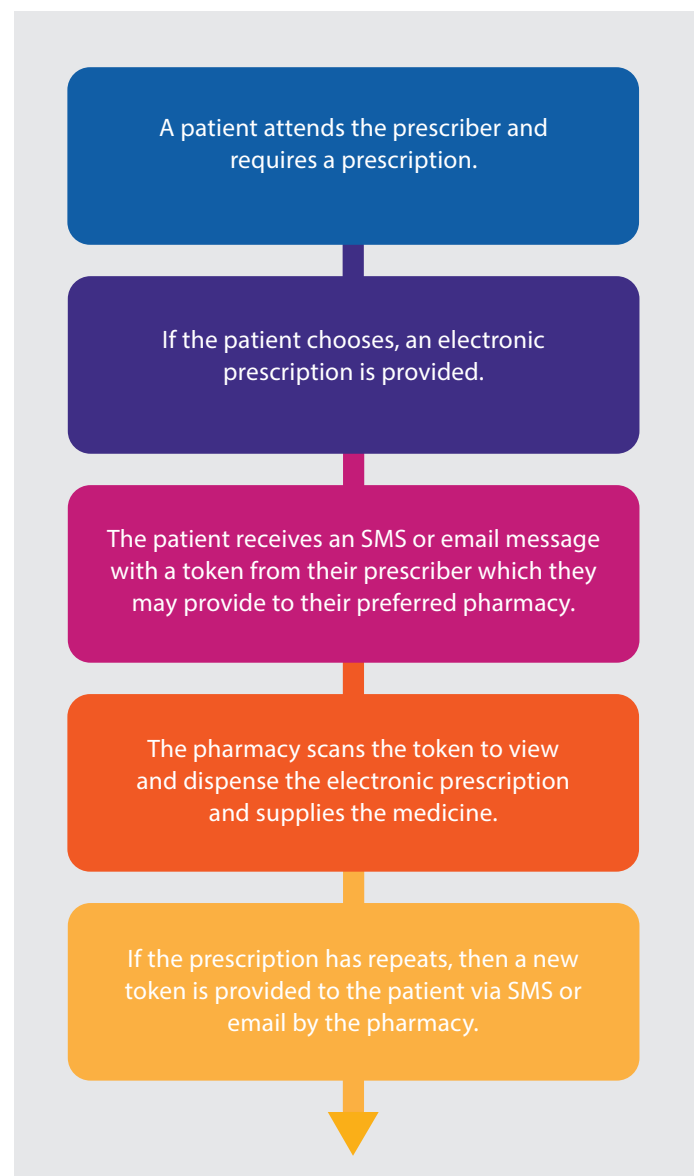
The 'token' that allows access to the prescription is a QR code, accessed via a link received through an SMS, email or mobile app. Patients can present this token at the pharmacy, send it electronically or order the medicine via a medication management pharmacy app.

The pharmacy can scan the QR code, or if the QR code is not scannable, they are able to enter the Delivery Service Provider ID (DSPID) number (a unique alpha-numeric code found at the bottom of the QR code) into their dispensing software to supply the medicine.

Over time it is anticipated that the use of paper prescriptions will continue to decline and greater adoption of e-prescriptions will continue to expand. Therefore, it is imperative that pharmacies continue to support hybrid dispensing workflows for both paper and electronic prescriptions.

How is an electronic prescription processed?

A patient attends the prescriber and requires a prescription.

If the patient chooses, an electronic prescription is provided.

The patient receives an SMS or email message with a token from their prescriber which they may provide to their preferred pharmacy.

The pharmacy scans the token to view and dispense the electronic prescription and supplies the medicine.

If the prescription has repeats, then a new token is provided to the patient via SMS or email by the pharmacy.

The electronic prescription dispensing process

Step 1

Receiving a prescription
- Ascertain authority to prescribe and validity of prescription
- Enter the e-prescription into the pharmacy's software as required
- Confirm with patient which address they wish to receive their repeat token – phone number or email

Step 2

Reviewing prescribed medicines
- Correctly identify the patient and obtain supplementary information
- Determine the prescriber's intentions, including the dosing instruction
- Review the medication history
- Obtain relevant patient information from other sources, including state/national digital platforms

Step 3

Considering supply arrangements
- Make decision to supply or decline supply
- Comply with legal and professional obligations for specific supply arrangements (e.g. scheduling of medicines, PBS-subsidised or emergency supply)

Step 4

Communicating with the prescriber, as required

Collaborate with the prescriber to ensure medicine safety

Step 5

Recording and documentation
- Double check the populated prescription details in the dispensing software
- Document medicine-related problems where appropriate

Step 6

Selecting or preparing the medicine
- Select or prepare the medicine
- Use a barcode scanner if packaging includes a barcode

Step 7

Labelling
- Label the medicine
- Use cautionary advisory labels where appropriate

Step 8

Supplying and counselling
- Check and recheck all dispensing for accuracy and completeness
- Confirm patient identity
- Counsel the patient, where appropriate
- Confirm that the patient has received their repeat prescription token if applicable

Step 9

Following up with patient or prescriber as required

Reference: Adapted from Pharmacy Board of Australia[4]

*Want to learn more? Scan here to access PSA's online learning module: **Overview of electronic prescriptions***

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Frequently asked questions from dispense staff

- *Can the pharmacist annotate an e-prescription?*

  Yes, similar to a paper prescription, electronic prescriptions can be annotated where appropriate in the "notes" section in your dispensing software. Any annotations will only be visible to dispensing staff – they will not appear on the patient's token.

- *Can a pharmacist disable an e-prescription?*

  Yes, an e-prescription can be disabled by dispensing staff in the pharmacy's dispensing software. In the event of a suspected fraudulent prescription or unusual dose, disabling an e-prescription effectively locks the prescription, meaning that other pharmacies are unable to dispense the prescription if presented the same token, preventing the patient from receiving the medicine. If appropriate, the e-prescription can be re enabled.

  Note: each dispensing software vendor will have a specific method for disabling and re-enabling a script.

- *Who do I contact if an e-prescription isn't downloading?*

  In the event that an e-prescription isn't downloading into the dispensing software, the dispensing software vendor should be contacted to rectify the issue.

Frequently asked questions from patients

- *Can someone else pick up my prescription?*

  Yes, if the patient is unable to visit the pharmacy, they can forward the token to a family member, carer or friend to collect the medicine on their behalf.

- *My prescription token isn't working, what's wrong?*

  If the prescription has already been dispensed, expired or cancelled, the token will not appear as 'active' and a QR code or DSPID will not be shown, therefore, it is unable to be dispensed. You may need to advise the patient to contact their prescriber to arrange a new prescription. If the e-prescription has been dispensed and the patient thinks they have another repeat, advise they check with the pharmacy who last dispensed the e-prescription or offer an Active Script List (ASL).

- *Can I have my electronic prescription printed instead?*

  Once an electronic prescription is prescribed by the prescriber, it cannot be converted to a traditional paper prescription.

  If patients prefer to manage their electronic prescription tokens using paper, the token QR code, (also called an Evidence of Prescription) can be printed.

- *Can you set me up with an Active Script List (ASL)?*

  ASL is a token management system, keeping a digital list of a patient's e-prescription and computer generated paper prescriptions, making medication management easier. This allows the patient to give consent to any participating pharmacy, who can then access their list to dispense any valid prescriptions requested. To register for ASL, patients will need to visit a participating pharmacy with 100 points of ID and a mobile phone. For a more detailed guide, please scan here:

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Other key points:

Schedule 8 prescriptions should be dispensed in accordance with their relevant state and territory legislation.

Due to PBS regulations, patients cannot receive a paper and an electronic prescription for the same medicine by the same prescriber on the same day.

At this point in time, electronic prescriptions can NOT be generated for:
- Prescriber Bag (Emergency drug supply) arrangements "doctorsbag"
- PBS Complex Authority Required (CAR) drugs

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