

Continued Dispensing and Emergency Supply in the ACT during COVID-19

The Australian Government's Continued Dispensing – Emergency Measures have been extended until 30 June 2020 for the COVID-19 emergency.

The Continued Dispensing arrangements enable a pharmacist to supply a Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) or Repatriation Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (RPBS) medicine to a patient when there is an immediate need and they cannot obtain a prescription.

Continued Dispensing is fully enabled under the ACT Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act 2008 and has immediate effect in the ACT.

In addition, on 1 April 2020, Dr Kerryn Coleman, ACT Chief Health Officer issued the Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods (Temporary Authority – Supply by pharmacists of designated Schedule 4 medicines without prescription) CHO Standing Order 2020 (No 2) to enable the emergency supply of a standard pack size of private designated (non-PBS) prescription only medicines by pharmacists without a prescription during the COVID-19 emergency.

The order applies to all prescription only medicines with the exception of anabolic steroids, designated Appendix D medicines and benzodiazepines. Controlled (schedule 8) medicines are also not permitted under the order.

The emergency supply order is intended to be a supportive measure for continued medicines access as COVID-19 puts pressures on the health system. The emergency supply order extends the arrangements put in place during the recent bushfire season.

Patients are still encouraged to contact their doctor regarding options for remote medical consultations and prescriptions during the COVID-19 emergency. Pharmacists are only able to supply medicines under Continued Dispensing or emergency supply arrangements where all other options for obtaining a prescription have been exhausted, including a telephone, faxed or electronic prescription.

ACT Health has been working closely with the ACT branches of the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia and Pharmacy Guild of Australia in developing this response.

Key requirements for pharmacists for ACT emergency supply

A pharmacist may supply a designated prescription only (schedule 4) medicine if satisfied that:

- the person is undergoing treatment essential to the person's well-being;
- the medicine has previously been prescribed for the treatment;
- the person is in immediate need of the medicine for continuation of the treatment; and
- it is not practicable for the person to obtain a prescription (including telephone, faxed or electronic prescription) for the medicine from an authorised practitioner.

A designated prescription only medicine may only be supplied under this authority if the quantity supplied is no more than:

- for a medicine that is on the PBS, the standard Pharmaceutical Benefits maximum quantity, or
- for a medicine that is not on the PBS, the quantity that is contained in the smallest standard pack in which the medicine is generally available.

The temporary standing order applies to designated prescription only medicines only. A designated prescription only medicine means a prescription only (schedule 4) medicines other than:

- an anabolic steroid, and
- a designated appendix D medicine, and
- a benzodiazepine.

Controlled (schedule 8) medicines are not permitted under the standing order.

Record Keeping

A written record of the following information is to be retained:

- the pharmacist's name;
- the name of the prescriber who would ordinarily have prescribed the medicine,
- the patient's name and address;
- the date the medicine is supplied;
- the medicine's approved name and brand name;
- the form, strength and quantity of the medicine.

Labelling

The supplied medicine must have a label that includes the following information:

- the name of the person to whom the medicine is to be supplied;
- the date the medicine is supplied;
- the medicine, and the form, strength and quantity of the medicine, supplied;
- if the package of the dispensed medicine is not a manufacturer's pack—
 - the batch number or numbers of the medicine; and
 - the relevant expiry date for the medicine;
- the pharmacy name, business address and telephone number;
- the initials or other identification of the pharmacist supplying the medicine;
- directions about the use of the medicine that are adequate to allow the medicine to be taken or administered safely, including any warning statement in the medicines and poisons standard, appendix K (Drugs required to be labelled with a sedation warning) applying to the medicine; and
- words to the effect of 'keep out of reach of children'.

Addition requirements apply for Continued Dispensing supply by pharmacists. Key requirements for Continued Dispensing may be found at <http://www.pbs.gov.au/info/news/2020/03/continued-dispensing-arrangements-covid-19>.

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