

## Fact Sheet for Health Professionals

# Electronic Prescribing

Changes have been made to South Australia's Controlled Substances (Poisons) Regulations 2011 to recognise an electronic prescription.

Amendments made to the *Controlled Substances (Poisons) Regulations 2011* (the Poisons Regulations) give prescribers and patients in South Australia the option to use an electronic prescription as an alternative to a paper based prescription.

Electronic prescriptions enable the prescribing, dispensing and claiming of medicines, without the need for a paper prescription.

### What is an electronic prescription?

An electronic prescription is a prescription that is electronically generated by prescribers using conformant prescribing software and sent to a person's mobile phone or computer. An electronic prescription is used in the same way as a paper prescription, to get prescribed medicines from a pharmacy.

Under the Poisons Regulations, an electronic prescription is defined as a prescription given in an *approved electronic form*; this means an electronic prescription must comply with the national regulatory and technical frameworks for electronic prescriptions developed by the Commonwealth Department of Health and the Australian Digital Health Agency. This ensures the safety and security of patient information transmitted in electronic prescriptions.

### What are the advantages of electronic prescriptions?

Electronic prescriptions will give people convenient access to their medicines and improve patient safety by reducing the risk of errors that can be associated with written prescriptions, including misinterpretation and illegible instructions.

This measure will reduce the administrative burden on health professionals including those managing vulnerable members of the community, and aligns with other important measures such as telehealth and home medicine delivery.

The Commonwealth Department of Health together with the Australian Digital Health Agency and software vendors are working to fast track the roll out electronic prescribing and dispensing systems during the COVID-19 pandemic as part of the National Health Plan to help protect people most at-risk in our community from exposure to COVID-19.

### How does it work?

The prescriber generates the prescription using their conformant prescribing software which then sends the patient a unique QR barcode known as a 'token' via an App, SMS or email. The token will be scanned by the pharmacist to unlock the electronic prescription from an encrypted and secure electronic prescription delivery service.

### Can repeats be supplied on electronic prescriptions?

If there are any repeats prescribed, a new token will be sent to the patient when the prescription is dispensed. The patient will need to keep the new token to give to the pharmacist when it is time to get the repeat filled.

Later in 2020 more functionality will be available and in addition to the token there will also be an option for a pharmacy to have a list of the patient's active prescriptions in their software.



## Is the electronic prescribing system secure?

Electronic prescribing systems must conform to stringent requirements developed by the Australian Digital Health Agency. These requirements ensure the integrity and safety of the prescription data and also identify the medical practice where the electronic prescription was prepared and the approved prescriber who prepared it.

Prescribers must use conformant electronic prescribing systems to generate electronic prescriptions.

## Who can give an electronic prescription?

Only registered health practitioners authorised under section 18 of the [Controlled Substances Act 1984](#) (the Act) can give an electronic prescription for a person, in the ordinary course of their professional duties. This includes registered medical practitioners, nurse practitioners, dentists and some other health practitioners with prescribing rights.

Veterinarians, while recognised prescribers of animal treatment under the Act, cannot provide electronic prescriptions as they currently do not have conformant electronic prescribing systems available.

## Are electronic prescriptions allowed for medicines on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS)?

Changes have been made to the PBS claim for payment system to support the new arrangements for electronic prescriptions. PBS medicines can be accessed at the subsidised rate whether the prescription is a written or electronic prescription.

## Can I still use a paper prescription if I prefer?

Electronic prescribing is not mandatory, but provides prescribers and their patients with an alternative to paper based prescriptions. Paper prescriptions will continue to be available.

## What are the requirements for Schedule 8 medicines (drugs of dependence) be prescribed electronically?

Schedule 8 medicines can be prescribed electronically by authorised prescribers where all legal requirements authorising the prescribing and supply of drugs of dependence are met.

Prescribers must include the **patient's date of birth** in the electronic prescription, and must keep a record of all the details required to be included in a prescription.

The electronic prescription or a copy of it must be retained for **at least 2 years** (at least 1 year for Schedule 4 drugs); and must be readily available for inspection by an authorised officer during that period.

Upon the request of an authorised officer, the pharmacist or medical practitioner must send a computer generated copy of the electronic prescription to the authorised officer.

## Where can I find the regulatory requirements for electronic prescriptions?

Regulatory requirements for electronic prescriptions including requirements for dispensing electronic prescriptions and record keeping requirements are detailed in the [Poisons Regulations](#), regulations 33 through 35A. These requirements are aligned with those for written prescriptions, which have not changed with the introduction of electronic prescribing.

## More Information

There are several sources for more detailed information about electronic prescribing including:

The PBS regulatory framework and claiming online for PBS medicines; go to:  
<https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/electronic-prescribing>

Electronic prescriptions for prescribers; go to:  
<https://www.digitalhealth.gov.au/get-started-with-digital-health/electronic-prescriptions/for-prescribers>

Frequently asked questions for consumers; go to:  
<https://www.digitalhealth.gov.au/get-started-with-digital-health/electronic-prescriptions>

---

## For more information

**Office of the Chief Pharmacist**  
**SA Health**  
**Department for Health and Wellbeing**  
**Citi Centre, 11 Hindmarsh Square, Adelaide**  
**Telephone: 8204 1944**  
[www.sahealth.sa.gov.au](http://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au)

Public

© Department for Health and Wellbeing, Government of South Australia. All rights reserved.



[www.ausgoal.gov.au/creative-commons](http://www.ausgoal.gov.au/creative-commons)



Government  
of South Australia

SA Health