

COVID-19 Quick Guide

Supply of Medicines from Digital Image of Prescription (ACT)

1. Eligible medicines

Schedule 4 medicines (excluding drugs of in Appendix D of the National Poisons Standard)

2. Implications for outpatient supply of medicines

Patients who obtain medicines from hospital outpatient pharmacies may not have an original paper prescription during the COVID-19 pandemic as it may be inappropriate for them to attend a hospital outpatient clinic, or the outpatient clinic appointment has been conducted via telehealth, or that their outpatient appointment has been cancelled.

However, patients must be able to continue to access their medicines in order to ensure continuity and adherence and avoid acute health issues that require care in a hospital.

To minimise risk of transmission to patients during the COVID-19 pandemic, ACT hospitals may elect to, under existing legislation, supply medicines to patients based on an electronically transmitted digital image via fax, of an original prescription sent directly to the pharmacist from the prescriber.

This enables proposed hospital practices during the COVID-19 pandemic, where to minimise patient's need to visit a hospital and reduce their risk, hospital prescribers can prescribe medicines for outpatients remotely, and send a digital image of that prescription to the hospital pharmacy for dispensing and supply to the patient via mail.

Existing obligations for pharmacists to keep records of all supplies of scheduled medicines have not changed. If a digital image of a PBS medicine prescription is issued with repeats, the Commonwealth requires that all remaining repeats are retained and supplied at the original dispensing pharmacy.

3. Practice considerations

- Determine the workflows within your health service for supplying medicines off a digital image of an original prescription
- Determine which patient groups are in the highest risk patient categories that would benefit from these arrangements. i.e. chemotherapy patients, immunosuppressed patients
- Determine which outpatient clinics would benefit most from these arrangements, particularly if your department, or certain outpatient clinics are operating with reduced capacity
- Consider how printouts of the digital image of the prescription will be retained for two years to satisfy existing obligations for record-keeping
- Read the Department of Health's (Fed) factsheet for pharmacists: [Interim arrangements for prescriptions for supply of medicines: Supporting telehealth patients and healthcare professionals](#)

4. Regulatory change details

Under the [Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Regulation 2008](#), "paper-based prescription includes a faxed copy of a prescription."

This is now complemented by amendments to the [National Health \(COVID-19 Supply of Pharmaceutical Benefits\) Amendment \(Expansion of Telehealth and Telephone Attendances\) Special Arrangement 2020](#) made on the 7 April 2020 that state:

"An approved hospital authority may supply a pharmaceutical benefit to a person on the first presentation of a prescription if a PBS prescriber has given the approved hospital authority dispenser a digital image of the prescription or a copy of the prescription."