

Telehealth Prescribing

Frequently asked questions

Please read the following FAQs in conjunction with the ACT Health Directorate advice for Telehealth Prescribing. Advice for prescribers and pharmacists is available on the ACT Health website at: <https://health.act.gov.au/pss>

Transmission of prescriptions

1. *Can a patient send a digital image prescription or faxed prescription to the pharmacy for dispensing?*

No. Prescriptions are required to be sent directly from the prescriber to the pharmacy.

2. *Can a pharmacy forward a digital image prescription or faxed prescription to another pharmacy for dispensing?*

No. Prescriptions are required to be sent directly from the prescriber to the pharmacy.

3. *Where can I access contact details for my patient's pharmacy of choice for sending a digital image or faxed prescription?*

You can check the Healthdirect website www.healthdirect.gov.au for this information. You can use this website to find pharmacies in your patient's preferred area as well as their contact details for sending prescriptions via email or fax.

Dispensing and medicines

4. *Can I dispense digital image prescriptions and faxed prescriptions for controlled (schedule 8) medicines or prescription only (schedule 4) Appendix D medicines in the ACT?*

Yes. The *National Health (COVID-19 Supply of Pharmaceutical Benefits) Special Arrangement 2020* made on 08 April 2020 allows the supply of controlled medicines (Schedule 8) and Schedule 4 Appendix D medicines where state or territory legislation allows supply using digital image prescriptions and faxed prescriptions.

The supply of controlled medicines and prescription only (Appendix D) medicines using electronic, digital image, fax or telephone prescriptions is enabled under ACT legislation. This has been retained in the ACT to support telehealth consultations and prescribing of essential medicines for all vulnerable patients in the community.

It is critical that prescribers send prescriptions directly to the patient's pharmacy and have the necessary ACT standing or Chief Health Officer approval in place in order to mitigate risk of diversion or duplicate dispensing of Appendix D or Schedule 8 medicines that may be subject to abuse or misuse.

Pharmacists are also reminded to use the DORA real time prescription monitoring website to support patient care for those requiring treatment with a controlled medicine. Further information about ACT DORA is available [here](#).

The following additional controls are recommended to be implemented by pharmacists when dispensing controlled medicines and prescription only (Appendix D) medicines that may be subject to abuse or misuse.

- Verify the prescription was sent directly from the prescriber to the pharmacy (patients/other pharmacies are not allowed to forward prescriptions to the pharmacy)
- Confirm the e-mail address details of the prescriber. It is recommended the pharmacy maintain a list of prescriber e-mail addresses at the pharmacy.
- Use DORA to verify the recent controlled medicine dispensing history for the patient.
- If your pharmacy is connected to a Prescription Exchange Service (PES) use the eTP¹ (Electronic Transfer of Prescriptions) Barcode in the prescription to dispense the prescription.
- Endorse date and time details of the receipt of the digital image prescription on the printed version kept at the pharmacy. This will assist pharmacists to trace the original e-mail sent by the prescriber if required in the future.

5. *Can I dispense repeat authorisations for digital image prescriptions and faxed prescriptions?*

Yes. The current Australian Government interim arrangements allow pharmacists to dispense repeat authorisations of digital image prescriptions and faxed prescriptions.

¹ Electronic Transfer of Prescriptions (ETP) is the safe and secure transfer of prescription information between a Prescriber and a Community Pharmacy using an electronic system known as a Prescription Exchange Service (PES).

There are currently two PES systems operating in Australia – eRx Script Exchange and MediSecure.

Under the Australian Government interim arrangements, pharmacists are required to:

- a) attach the repeat authorisation to a print out of the digital image of the prescription or the copy of the prescription; and
- b) **retain the repeat authorisation** and the **print out of the digital image** of the prescription or the copy of the prescription **at the pharmacy**.

6. *Can I give the repeat authorisation of the digital image prescriptions/faxed prescriptions to the patient?*

No. Under the Australian Government interim arrangement repeat prescriptions are required to be retained by the initial dispensing pharmacy.

However, if a pharmacist dispenses a faxed prescription and receives the original, they **can** give the repeat authorisation to the patient.

7. *Can I “defer” the supply of a medicine listed in a digital image prescription/faxed prescription?*

Yes. The current Australian Government interim arrangements allow pharmacists to defer the supply of a medicine listed in a digital image prescriptions and faxed prescriptions.

Under the Australian Government interim arrangements, the pharmacists are required to

- a) attach the repeat authorisation to a print out of the digital image of the prescription or the copy of the prescription; and
- b) **retain the repeat authorisation** and the **print out of the digital image** of the prescription or the copy of the prescription **at the pharmacy**.

Record keeping

8. *What are the record keeping requirements for digital image prescriptions and faxed prescriptions for prescribers and pharmacists written in accordance with the Australian Government interim arrangements for telehealth consultations?*

Under the Australian Government interim arrangement, a **prescriber** is required to retain the original of a faxed prescription for at least 2 years, which is permitted by ACT legislation. Prescriptions can be kept in paper or electronic format.

Prescribers should **also obtain and record patient’s consent** to send the prescriptions **electronically**.

Practices may wish to consider implementing autofill or similar method for recording verbal consent to send prescriptions via email or text.

For example, "scripts dated 21/04/2020 emailed to ABC Pharmacy using abcpharmacy@gmail.com and original kept at practice". [NOTE: FICTITIOUS ADDRESS for purposes of example only]

Further, if the original prescription was later delivered to the pharmacy, then practices may wish to consider an entry to the patient file to record this as well.

Under the Australian Government interim arrangement, **pharmacists** must keep a copy of the digital image prescription or the faxed prescription for two years from the date of supply.

Pharmacists are required to confirm whether the faxed prescription was written as part of a telehealth consultation in order to meet the ACT record keeping requirements and should make a record of this.

Verbal advice from the prescriber or patient is considered sufficient for this purpose.

Prescribers can also confirm this in writing on the faxed prescription.

9. *What are the requirements for faxed prescriptions that are not written in accordance with the Australian Government interim arrangements for telehealth consultations?*

Under updated MPTG Regulation, prescribers are required to **send the original of a faxed prescription** to the pharmacy within **7 days** of sending it via fax to the pharmacy.

Pharmacists are required to **notify** the Pharmaceutical Services Section of the Health Protection Service (on behalf of the Chief Health Officer), in writing, if they fail to receive the original prescription of a faxed prescription **within 14 days of dispensing of the prescription**. Notifications may be sent to pss@act.gov.au or via fax 02 5124 9309.

Pharmacists must keep a copy of a **faxed prescription** until they receive the original prescription from the prescriber.

Electronic signatures

10. *Can a prescriber use electronic signatures in prescriptions in the ACT?*
Electronic signatures are enabled in the ACT.

Interstate queries

11. *Can a pharmacist working in an ACT pharmacy dispense digital image prescriptions or faxed prescriptions for controlled (schedule 8) medicines and prescription only (schedule 4) Appendix D medicines from an interstate prescriber?*

Yes. Interstate prescribers can send digital image prescriptions and faxed prescriptions for controlled medicines to ACT pharmacies for dispensing if they meet their own state and territory regulatory requirements.

Most states and territories other than ACT require the prescribers to send the original paper-based prescription for controlled (schedule 8) medicines and prescription only (schedule 4) Appendix D medicines to the pharmacy within 24 hours.

For example, in NSW, in an emergency, prescribers can direct the supply of a registered controlled medicine to a pharmacist via telephone, e-mail or fax. The prescriber is required to send the **original prescription** to the pharmacy within **24 hours**.

12. *Can a pharmacist working in an interstate pharmacy dispense digital image prescriptions for controlled (schedule 8) medicines and prescription only (schedule 4) Appendix D medicines issued by an ACT prescriber?*

Pharmacists are required to comply with their own state and territory regulatory requirements. For example, some restrictions apply on the dispensing of schedule 8 and NSW schedule 4 Appendix D medicines in NSW.

13. *Can an ACT prescriber issue a digital image prescription for controlled (schedule 8) medicines and prescription only (schedule 4) Appendix D medicines for patient residing in NSW?*

ACT prescribers are reminded that each state and territory have different requirements associated with digital image prescriptions. Some restrictions apply on the dispensing of schedule 8 and NSW schedule 4 Appendix D medicines in NSW.

Accessibility

If you have difficulty reading a standard printed document and would like an alternative format, please phone 13 22 81.



If English is not your first language and you need the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS), please call 13 14 50.

For further accessibility information, visit: www.health.act.gov.au/accessibility

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