CRITERIA FOR ISSUING
NON-HANDWRITTEN (COMPUTER GENERATED) PRESCRIPTIONS

The specifications for the details to be included in prescriptions in NSW are set out in clause 35 (for restricted substances (Schedule 4)) and clause 80 (for drugs of addiction (Schedule 8)) of the Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Regulation 2008 (the Regulation), under the Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act 1966.

Generally, these clauses require the person issuing the prescription to show, in that person’s own handwriting:

- the date on which the prescription is issued;
- the name and address (including the street number) of the patient or, in the case of a prescription written for animal treatment, the name and address of the owner of the animal and the species of the animal;
- the name, strength and quantity of the restricted substance or drug of addiction to be dispensed (for a drug of addiction, the quantity to be dispensed must be shown in both words and figures);
- the number of repeats authorised if the prescription is to be dispensed more than once and, in certain cases, the time interval between dispensing;
- adequate directions for use; and
- the prescriber’s signature

Clauses 35(2) and 80(2) of the Regulation provide that where certain criteria are met, not all of the items shown above need to be in the prescriber’s own handwriting.

Prescriptions for restricted substances (Schedule 4)

For the purpose of clause 35(2) of the Regulation, i.e. in the case of prescriptions for restricted substances (medicines included in Schedule 4 of the NSW Poisons List) the Secretary has approved the following particulars being produced by a system rather than in the medical practitioner’s, dentist’s, nurse practitioner’s, midwife practitioner’s, veterinary practitioner’s, or optometrist’s own handwriting:

- the date on which the prescription is issued;
- the name of the patient (including given name, where known, or initial letter, and appellation) for whom the substance is being prescribed or, if for animal treatment, the name of the owner of the animal and its species;
- the full residential address (including street number) of the person or animal’s owner;
- the name of the substance or the preparation containing it, including the strength where more than one strength is available;
- the quantity being prescribed;
- adequate directions for use;
- the number of repeats authorised if repeats are ordered; and
- the interval for repeats if required by legislation or deemed appropriate by the prescriber,
provided that the system for producing prescriptions is so designed that it requires:

- the prescription to be produced by the prescriber only;
- the prescriber to sign, in their own handwriting, the prescription form so produced as near as practicable below the last item prescribed on the form (see sample prescription on page 6);
- the prescription to be printed on a form which is pre-printed with the name and address and contact telephone number of the prescriber OR which is pre-printed with at least the address and contact telephone number of the practice and the system individually prints the name of the prescriber on the prescription when the prescription is being produced;
- either a statement to be printed on each prescription form indicating the total number of items prescribed on that prescription form, or any unused area on the prescription form to be scored, hatched or otherwise marked in some way to prevent any other item being printed in that area;
- the directions for use of the restricted substance to be determined and included on each occasion by the prescriber;
- the particulars of any prescription issued to be included in the clinical or prescription record of the person or animal for whom the prescription was produced;
- a number which uniquely identifies each prescription form to be printed on the form and which can be related to the clinical or prescription record of the person or animal for whom that prescription was produced;
- the prescription produced in accordance with these criteria to be issued without alteration, and especially not altered by hand after printing;
- when the patient is an infant or a child under the age of twelve, the age of the patient to be included on the prescription;
- when the prescriber requires a dose that is less than 1mL and that dose is recorded as a decimal value, the dose to be printed with a leading zero (i.e. 0.3mL rather than .3mL even though the prescriber may enter the dose as .3mL); and
- the clinical or prescription record of the person or animal for whom the prescription was issued to be preserved for at least two years from the date on which the prescription was produced and can be accessed when required.

Note: For the sake of uniformity of prescription presentation and completeness of records, any prescriptions issued for NON-PRESCRIPTION medications should be produced in accordance with the above criteria.
Prescriptions for drugs of addiction (Schedule 8)

For the purpose of clause 80(2) of the Regulation, i.e. in the case of prescriptions for drugs of addiction (medicines included in Schedule 8 of the NSW Poisons List) the Secretary has approved the following particulars being produced by a system rather than in the medical practitioner's, dentist's, nurse practitioner's, midwife practitioner's or veterinary practitioner's own handwriting:

- the date on which the prescription is issued;
- the name of the patient (including given name, where known, or initial letter, and appellation) for whom the substance is being prescribed or, if for animal treatment, the name of the owner of the animal and its species; and
- the full residential address (including street number) of the person or animal’s owner,

provided that the system for producing prescriptions is so designed that it requires:

- the prescription to be produced by the prescriber only;
- automatic indication that, in addition to the particulars being produced by the system, the prescriber must rewrite on the prescription, in their own handwriting, all of the mandatory particulars (that is, other than the date and the patient's or animal owner's name and address), namely:
  - the name of the substance or the preparation containing it, including the strength where more than one strength is available;
  - the quantity being prescribed (in both words and figures);
  - adequate directions for use; and
  - the number of repeats authorised if the prescription is to be dispensed more than once and, if repeats are ordered, the interval for repeats;

(Note: Where the prescription is in duplicate, the mandatory particulars are to be rewritten in the prescriber’s own handwriting on only one copy of the prescription, to be retained by the pharmacy. Where the prescription is written as a private prescription, duplicate copies must not be issued.)

- the prescriber to sign, in their own handwriting, the prescription form so produced as near as practicable below the only item prescribed on the form (see sample prescription on page 5);
- the prescription to be printed on a form which is pre-printed with the name and address and contact telephone number of the prescriber OR which is pre-printed with at least the address and contact telephone number of the practice and the system individually prints the name of the prescriber on the prescription when the prescription is being produced;
- either a statement to be printed indicating that this is the only item on that prescription form (only one item may appear on a prescription for a drug of addiction), or any unused area on the prescription form to be scored, hatched or otherwise marked in some way to prevent any other item being printed in that area;
- the directions for use of the drug of addiction to be determined and included
on each occasion by the prescriber;

- the particulars of any prescription issued to be included in the clinical or prescription record of the person or animal for whom the prescription was produced;
- a number which uniquely identifies each prescription form to be printed on the form and which can be related to the clinical or prescription record of the person or animal for whom that prescription was produced;
- the prescription produced in accordance with these criteria to be issued without alteration and especially not altered by hand after printing;
- **when the patient is an infant or a child under the age of twelve**, the age of the patient to be included on the prescription;
- when the prescriber requires a dose that is less than 1mL and that dose is recorded as a decimal value, the dose to be printed with a leading zero (i.e. 0.3mL rather than .3mL even though the prescriber may enter the dose as .3mL); and
- the clinical or prescription record of the person or animal for whom the prescription was issued to be preserved for at least two years from the date on which the prescription was produced and can be accessed when required.

**NOTE (1):** It is essential that any non-handwritten (e.g. computer-generated) prescription produced in accordance with these criteria is issued without alteration to ensure both that the system record is consistent with the prescription and that the dispensing pharmacist will not be concerned about either accuracy or possible imposition.

**NOTE (2):** Any additional requirements of the Commonwealth Government must be observed.

**NOTE (3):** Prescriptions issued by dentists, optometrists or veterinary practitioners must be endorsed "For dental treatment only", "For optometrical treatment only" or "For animal treatment only", respectively.

**NOTE (4):** Where a system for producing non-handwritten prescriptions does not satisfy the above criteria the individual approval of the Secretary of the Ministry of Health must be sought.

**NOTE (5):** Where a non-handwritten (e.g. computer-generated) prescription is in duplicate, the mandatory particulars are to be rewritten in the prescriber’s own handwriting on only one copy of the prescription, to be retained by the pharmacy. Where the prescription is written as a private prescription, duplicate copies must not be issued.

Contact the Duty Pharmaceutical Officer
Pharmaceutical Services Unit
Legal and Regulatory Services Branch
NSW Ministry of Health
Telephone (02) 9391 9944, Fax (02) 9424 5860
Locked Mail Bag 961 NORTH SYDNEY NSW 2059
Sample prescription for Schedule 8 drugs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PBS</th>
<th>9999902</th>
<th>Name/Address of Prescriber</th>
<th>Practice Address</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Phone Number</td>
<td>Phone Number</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Date

Mr. B. Patient (age if child) 10
41 High Street
Anytown

Rx Item 10mg. Send: 20 (twenty) tablets
Repeat six times at intervals of 10 days
Label: One in the morning and at bedtime when required for pain

Rx Item 10mg
20 (twenty) tablets
Repeat six times at intervals of 10 days
Sig: 1’m et hs pm for pain

No. of items = 1

Refer to key on Page 7 for explanation
Sample prescription for OTHER THAN Schedule 8 drugs

PBS ⁵

9999901 ²

Name/Address of Prescriber ¹
Phone Number
Practice Address ²
Phone Number

Date ³

John Patient ³ (age 8) ¹⁰
41 High Street
Anytown

Rx Item A ³ 40mg ⁹
Send: 100 Repeat twice
Label: 1 t.d.s. p.c.

Rx Item B ³ 5mg.
Send: 50 Repeat once in 25 days ¹¹
Label: 1 b.d.

Rx Item C ³ 1%
Send: 10g. tube No repeats ⁸
Label: Apply to finger once a day

No. of items ³ = 3 ⁵

Anthony ⁴ (Anthony
Doctor)

Refer to key on Page 7 for explanation
KEY

1. Must be pre-printed on the form (alternative to 2).

2. Must be pre-printed and the system must print the prescriber's name at the foot of the prescription.

3. To be produced by the system at the time of issue.

4. Prescriber's own handwriting (right below last item).

5. Show the total number of items on the prescription and/or score out the balance of the form.

6. Commonwealth requirement together with any other Commonwealth requirements.

7. A number which uniquely identifies each form produced by the system at the time of issue and which relates to the patient’s clinical or prescription record, which must be kept for 2 years.

8. Recommend endorse "No repeats" if none are required, as a safeguard to alteration.

9. Underline and initial any unusual or dangerous dose.

10. Age must be shown if a child or infant.

11. Intervals for repeats may, or in some cases must, be specified.

12. Must be in the prescriber's own handwriting as well as being produced by the system (the system should remind the prescriber of this).

13. Quantity in both words and figures.

14. Only one item allowed per form.

15. Authority of the NSW Ministry of Health is required for continuous prescribing for more than 2 months in some cases (no prescribing at all for drug dependent persons without prior State authority). See TG 212 - Requirements for an Authority to Prescribe Drugs of Addiction under section 28 of the Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act.
Note 1: No alteration may be made to the prescription (it should be re-created if a mistake has been made).

Note 2: Prescriptions issued by dentists, optometrists or veterinary surgeons should be endorsed "For dental treatment only" "For optometrical treatment only" or "For animal treatment only", respectively.

For further information or clarification of these guidelines, contact the Duty Pharmaceutical Officer, Pharmaceutical Services, during office hours on (02) 9391 9944.

This guide has been produced by:
Pharmaceutical Services Unit
Legal and Regulatory Services Branch
NSW Ministry of Health
Telephone (02) 9391 9944
Fax (02) 9424 5860
Email: pharmserv@doh.health.nsw.gov.au
Website: http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/pharmaceutical