

Requirement for patient date of birth on prescriptions and in dispensing records

Information for pharmacists

From **1 November 2022** all prescriptions for Schedule 4 and Schedule 8 medicines that are issued and dispensed in NSW must show the patient's date of birth (DOB) as well as the patient's name and address.

When dispensing a prescription, a pharmacist must make a record of the patient's DOB in the dispensing system. Where the patient's DOB does not appear on the prescription, a pharmacist may still dispense the prescription, but must obtain the patient's DOB from the patient or their agent, and record this in the patient's profile within the dispensing system.

Background

In NSW the data elements for prescriptions and record keeping requirements for dispensing are defined in the *Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Regulation 2008* (the Regulation) and in various instruments.

The DOB of a person is an important data element used for identification purposes. Although mandatory for conformant electronic prescriptions, a patient's DOB has not previously been required on other forms of prescription.

This regulatory change to include the patient's DOB will improve patient safety by strengthening identification of the patient and through improving the information held in SafeScript NSW will help to reduce the incidence of harm from use of monitored medicines.

Changes to take effect 1 November 2022

- All prescriptions for Schedule 4 and Schedule 8 medicines, including handwritten prescriptions and computer-generated prescriptions (those generated from prescribing clinical software and printed on paper), will require the patient's DOB¹.
- When dispensing a prescription, a pharmacist must record the patient's DOB in the dispensing system.
- Where a patient's DOB does not appear on a prescription the pharmacist must obtain this from the patient or their agent and record it in the patient's profile within the dispensing system. The pharmacist will not be required to return the prescription to the prescriber for alteration, ensuring that supply of medicine to the patient is not interrupted.
- For monitored medicines, the pharmacist must ensure that the patient's DOB is included in the information communicated to the SafeScript NSW system when the medicine is dispensed. This will occur automatically.

¹ While DOB will be a required data element for all prescriptions, pharmacists will not be prevented from dispensing a prescription when it is not present. This is expected to simplify the introduction of these changes.

provided the patient DOB is recorded in the patient profile and the dispensing software is connected to a prescription exchange service².

Preparing for the change

The clinical practice software industry has been advised of these changes. Any questions about your dispensing software's readiness should be directed to the system provider. Pharmacists should:

- Check that the pharmacy is running the latest version of dispensing software.
- Ensure that the patient's DOB is recorded in the patient profile before or during dispensing.
- Prepare a procedure for your pharmacy on establishing patient DOB for all prescriptions presented and inform staff of the requirements.

Frequently asked questions

Will clinical practice software require approval by NSW Health?

No. Under the Regulation, the obligation to comply with requirements on issuing and dispensing prescriptions remains with health practitioners. Vendors will be expected to undertake a self-assessment to ensure the necessary functionality is in place by **1 November 2022** and facilitate compliance by health practitioners to the new legal requirement.

Which type of prescriptions are affected by these changes?

These regulatory changes will affect prescriptions for all Schedule 4 and Schedule 8 medicines that are issued and dispensed in NSW. This includes:

- Handwritten prescriptions.
- Computer generated (non-handwritten) prescriptions that are printed on paper. These must comply with TG184 (See <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/pharmaceutical/Documents/prescriptions-nonhandwritten.pdf>).
- Computer generated (electronic transfer of prescription) prescriptions³.
- Conformant electronic prescriptions⁴ (an existing requirement).

Why will NSW require DOB on all prescriptions, when some jurisdictions only require DOB on Schedule 8 prescriptions?

DOB is already a mandatory data element for all conformant electronic prescriptions. NSW Health received feedback that it would be simplest for prescribers using handwritten prescriptions to have one rule for all prescriptions.

Why is a pharmacist permitted to dispense a prescription even if a DOB is not recorded on the prescription?

While a prescriber must include a patient DOB on a prescription, if they fail to do so, the prescription can still be dispensed by the pharmacist, under an exception from the valid form of prescription permitted in clauses 39 and 85 of the Regulation. Where a prescription is presented without the patient DOB, the pharmacist must obtain the patient's DOB from the patient or their agent and record this in the patient's profile within the dispensing system. The *National Health (Pharmaceutical Benefits) Regulation 2017* does not mandate DOB as a compulsory field on a physical Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme prescription.

² The ePrescribing infrastructure provided by the Commonwealth Government, primarily the Prescription Exchange Services (eRx and MediSecure) <https://www.digitalhealth.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/electronic-prescriptions>

³ <https://developer.digitalhealth.gov.au/products/electronic-transfer-prescription>

⁴ <https://www.digitalhealth.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/electronic-prescriptions>