

Requirement for patient date of birth on prescriptions

Information for prescribers

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.

Where a patient's DOB does not appear on a prescription, a pharmacist may still dispense the prescription, but must obtain the patient's DOB from the patient or their agent and record this 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.

While prescription requirements have minor variances between states and territories, there is increasing commonality emerging, particularly as the adoption of conformant electronic prescriptions grows.

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. This requirement also applies when prescriptions are written on Pharmaceutical Benefit Scheme (PBS) prescription stationery.
- 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 document it in 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.

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.

Preparing for the change

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

Prescribers should:

- Check that your practice is running the latest version of your prescribing software.
- Ensure that the patient's DOB is recorded in the patient's profile prior to prescribing.
- Check that computer generated printed prescription output from your system includes the patient's DOB. If not check the patient's profile and, if necessary, contact the vendor for support.
- Use manual reminders to add the patient's DOB to handwritten prescriptions.

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 and ensure that the necessary functionality is in place by **1 November 2022** to facilitate compliance by health practitioners to the new legal requirement.

Which type of prescriptions are affected by these changes?

These 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) prescriptions².
- Conformant electronic prescriptions³ (an existing requirement).

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

Patient 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 permitted in the Regulation. Where a prescription is presented without the patient's DOB, the pharmacist must obtain the patient's DOB from the patient or their agent and record this in the dispensing system.

² <https://developer.digitalhealth.gov.au/products/electronic-transfer-prescription>

³ <https://www.digitalhealth.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/electronic-prescriptions>