

Risk Assessment Tool

Assessing the Potential Harms of Providing Take Away Doses

The provision of take away doses is a clinical decision made by a prescriber for an individual patient and should be based on a thorough risk/benefit assessment and not be solely on time in treatment.

Prescribers are encouraged to use this *risk assessment tool* when reviewing patients to help decide if it is appropriate to provide take away doses.

This tool does not replace a prescriber's professional judgement or responsibility to determine the appropriate clinical treatment for a patient.

Reasonable need

A reasonable need should be established, before take away doses are provided. At least one of the following should be present:

- > Work, study or family commitments where daily attendance at a pharmacy is not possible
- > Living in a rural or remote area where daily travel to a pharmacy is difficult
- > Significant medical condition restricting ability to attend a pharmacy on a daily basis
- > Urgent travel where alternative arrangements for supervised dosing cannot be organised
- > Incentive and reward for stability and progress in treatment

If no reasonable need can be established, the prescriber should reconsider if take away doses are appropriate.

Take away framework

After a continuous period of stability in treatment, take away doses may be considered. For some patients with very low risk scores and no history of intravenous drug use, take away doses may be considered during the maintenance phase.

The following schedule* is recommended:

Buprenorphine/naloxone (Suboxone)		
Induction and stabilisation Usually first 1–3 months of treatment	Supervised dosing (except in special circumstances)	
Maintenance phase Takeaway availability based on risk assessment	High risk	Supervised dosing (except in special circumstances)
	Moderate risk	Maximum 4 TAs per week
	Low risk	Not more than 28 consecutive days unsupervised
Methadone		
Induction and stabilisation Usually first 3 months of treatment	Supervised dosing (except in special circumstances)	
Maintenance phase Takeaway availability based on risk assessment	High risk	Supervised dosing (except in special circumstances)
	Moderate risk	Maximum 2 TAs per week (consider if supervised doses should be non-consecutive)
	Low risk	Maximum 4 TAs per week

*Prescribers are recommended to discuss the patient's stability in treatment and suitability for take away doses with the dosing pharmacist before varying from the schedule.



Patient name:

Date of birth:

Next review date:

Regular reviews and ongoing risk assessment are recommended.

How to use this tool to assess an individual patient's relative risk

1. Mark each box that applies
2. Calculate the total risk score
3. The total risk score corresponds to a level of risk (Low, Moderate or High) and Recommended Action

Patient risk factors	Risk rating	Risk score
No safe and secure storage facility for medication	Critical	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Concerns about risk of harm to self or others, especially children	Critical	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Reported diversion	Critical	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Concerns about misusing take away doses • hoarding or reports of lost/stolen doses	Critical	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
UDS negative for prescribed drug	Critical	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Reported overdose to any substance	Major	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Unsanctioned use of medications > Repeated intoxication on presentation for dosing > Misuse of prescribed medication (injecting, snorting, smoking) > Evidence of unsanctioned drug use or drug seeking	Major	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Unstable or symptomatic physical or mental health disorders	Medium	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
Unstable accommodation (e.g. homelessness, prison release)	Medium	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
Inherent risk of medication (methadone doses >80mg)	Medium	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
Concerns about problematic alcohol use	Medium	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
Attendance at medical/case manager reviews and pharmacy > Irregular attendance > Unstable dose, missed doses > Inappropriate behaviour at pharmacy or clinic	Medium	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
Other		
Total risk score:		

Level of risk and recommendations for provision of take away doses¹

Level of risk	Risk score	Recommended action
High	≥ 10	Take away doses not recommended
Moderate	4-9	Reconsider prescribing take away doses
Low	≤ 3	Take away doses may be appropriate

Comments: (e.g. overall assessment, matters for follow up)

Prescriber's Name:

Prescriber's signature:

Date:

For more information

Drugs of Dependence Unit

PO Box 6

ADELAIDE SA 5000

Telephone: 1300 652 584

Fax: 1300 658 447

www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/drugsofdependence

HealthDrugsOfDependenceUnit@sa.gov.au

© Department for Health and Wellbeing, Government of South Australia. All rights reserved.



<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/>



Government of South Australia

SA Health

¹ Modified from SA Health Risk Management Framework [Appendix D.1 - Strategic and operational risk assessment matrix](#)