

# Emergency Supply of essential medicines and coronavirus (COVID-19)

A temporary Emergency Supply provision is in place to support people to access their critical medicines from their pharmacist without a prescription. This may be considered when there is an immediate need for the medicine and you have not been able to obtain a prescription due to impacts of the Coronavirus emergency.

## Emergency supply of medicine without a prescription

The Emergency Supply provision enables pharmacists to dispense an emergency supply of essential medicines without a prescription. These provisions are to ensure you can access your prescription medicines when you are unable to obtain a prescription, for example where there may be reduced access to medical services due to the coronavirus pandemic.

If you are unable to obtain a prescription, contact your pharmacist (or a local pharmacy) to discuss options available to you.

## When can the Emergency Supply provision be used?

As per existing legislation for Emergency Supply of Schedule 4 Prescription Only (S4) medicines, the pharmacist must be satisfied there is an immediate need and:

- > the person for whom it is to be supplied is being medically treated with the drug; and
- > the continued supply of that drug is essential to the health of that person; and
- > there is good reason for the person's inability to produce a prescription for the drug.

Pharmacists must record the information required under the regulations for the emergency supply of S4 drugs.

## What can pharmacists dispense?

Under the Emergency Supply provision a pharmacist may dispense:

- > for drugs that are on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) – no more than the standard PBS maximum quantity; or
- > for drugs that are not on the PBS - the quantity that is contained in the smallest standard pack in which the drug is generally available.

## Who can pharmacists supply to?

The Emergency Supply provision is available to South Australians who have an immediate need AND they are unable to access a prescription for their essential medicines. For example, a person who has

# Consumer fact sheet

run out, or will run out of their essential medicines before they can obtain a prescription due to impacts of the coronavirus on their regular GP or health service.

If you are unable to obtain a prescription, contact your pharmacist (or a local pharmacy) preferably by phone to discuss options available to you.

## Are there drugs that cannot be supplied under the Emergency Supply provision?

The Emergency Supply provision does not apply to certain drugs including:

- > Schedule 8 drugs (S8) including opioids, some benzodiazepines and stimulants
- > Drugs that are restricted to prescribing by relevant specialist medical practitioners only including:
  - drugs listed in Regulation 19 of the [Poisons Regulations](#) and
  - drugs listed in Appendix D of the [Poisons Standard](#).
  - The above categories include medicines such as certain fertility and cancer drugs and hydroxychloroquine.

## Ensuring fair access to medicines for all Australians

To ensure that medicines are available for all Australians who need them, consumers should be careful not to purchase or request more medicines than they need. Stockpiling medicines can disrupt access to vital medicines in particular during times of increased need for patients affected by the coronavirus.

Pharmacists are required to limit dispensing of certain prescription medicines to one month's supply at the prescribed dose, and sales of certain over-the-counter medicines to a maximum of one unit per purchase.

Prescribers and pharmacists have also been advised to avoid prescribing or dispensing multiple months of supply of prescription medicines to patients where there is no clinical need to do so.

## What information do I need to provide the pharmacist?

The pharmacist will need your name and contact details. They may ask you for the name of the health practitioner who usually prescribes your medication.

To fulfil their duty of care, the pharmacist will need to speak to you and ask you questions about your health history, they may also need to gather information from other health professionals (e.g. your GP or other pharmacists) to be satisfied that the medication is essential for your health. They will also need to be satisfied that there is a good reason why you are unable to produce a prescription.

They will also need details of your medicines including name, strength and dose directions where you have these available. If possible, take along anything that documents what medicines you are taking.

If you have a MyHealthRecord, your pharmacist may be able to look up details about your medicines or contact your usual GP practice or community pharmacy to confirm details.

# Consumer fact sheet

## What if I know which medication I need, but don't remember the dosage?

The pharmacist will talk to you and get as much information as possible to assess the dosage required.

## Will there be a cost for the medicines?

The Commonwealth Government has enabled PBS subsidy for the supply of a range of medicines under the [PBS Continued Dispensing scheme](#). If the medicine you require is subsidised under the PBS you may be able to receive it at the subsidised price, provided the pharmacist is satisfied you meet the eligibility criteria.

Some medicines supplied by pharmacists without a prescription are not subsidised by the PBS. In those circumstances you will be required to pay full-price for the medicine.

The costs for medicines vary greatly and may vary between pharmacies. You should discuss these costs with your pharmacist. Some people may be able to claim for reimbursement under their private health insurance.

## Further information about COVID-19

For the latest updates about coronavirus disease in South Australia go to [www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/COVID2019](http://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/COVID2019) or contact the National Coronavirus Helpline on telephone 1800 020 080.

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## For more information

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