



ST VINCENT'S  
HEALTH AUSTRALIA

# Regulations and Opioid Prescribing

Victorian Opioid Management ECHO  
Department of Addiction Medicine  
St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne 2018

UNDER THE STEWARDSHIP OF MARY AIKENHEAD MINISTRIES

# The rules

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**When treating a patient in the community it is not permissible to prescribe opioids to an opioid dependent person without a valid permit (see later slide for exceptions)**

**The only opioids that can legitimately prescribed for the maintenance of opioid dependence are methadone, buprenorphine, or buprenorphine/naloxone**

**Prior to treating an opioid dependent person with opioids the prescriber must hold a valid permit:**

**S8 permit to treat**

**Permission to treat an opioid dependent person permit**

# When is notification (of dependence) required

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**Notification of drug dependent person** Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Act 1981 Section 33 of the Act requires a medical or nurse practitioner who has reason to believe that a patient is a drug dependent person to notify the department, using this form, where:

- the patient seeks prescription of a Schedule 8 or Schedule 9 poison, or a Schedule 4 poison which is also a drug of dependence,
- or - the practitioner intends to treat or is treating the patient with a Schedule 8 or Schedule 9 poison, or a Schedule 4 poison which is also a drug of dependence.

# Prescribed opioids and permits

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Applying for a permit to prescribe methadone or buprenorphine:

An Application for a permit to treat an opioid-dependent person with methadone or buprenorphine must be sent to the Department of Health and Human Services for approval.

A separate permit is required for each patient (exceptions to the requirement to obtain a permit are detailed in next slide “Circumstances where a notification of treatment is required”) The application can be completed and submitted online at:

[www.health.vic.gov.au/dpcs/pharm](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/dpcs/pharm)

The application may also be completed by hand and sent by facsimile (1300 360 830).



# List of online forms

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The following forms are available to complete and submit online:

- [1. Application for a permit to treat a patient with Schedule 8 drugs](#)
- [2. Application for a permit to treat an opioid dependent person with methadone or buprenorphine](#)
- [3. Notification of drug-dependent person](#)
- [4. Notification of termination of methadone or buprenorphine program](#)
- [5. Cancellation of Schedule 8 treatment permits](#)
- [6. Application for a warrant to obtain, use, supply or prescribe restricted Schedule 4 medicines](#)
- [7. Notifications and records to be submitted to Drugs and Poisons Regulation \(for pharmacists to complete\)](#)
- [8. Notification of forged or altered prescription \(for pharmacists to complete\)](#)
- [9. Propose changes or review an existing licence or permit to obtain \(and possibly supply\) scheduled substances](#)
- [10. Apply for a new licence or permit to obtain \(and possibly supply\) scheduled substances](#)
- [11. Make a notification of lost scheduled substance \(for organisations to complete\)](#)
- [12. Notification of lost and stolen prescriptions \(for prescribers to complete\)](#)

# Management by deputising prescribers

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**All deputising prescribers should manage the patient as described:**

- **Continue the usual prescriber's management plan and dosage regimen as documented in the clinical record. (It is acceptable to reduce the dose if the patient is experiencing toxicity.)**
- **Note on the prescription that you are temporarily deputising for the patient's usual prescriber.**
- **Limit the duration of the prescription to the expected period of absence of the usual prescriber, indicating precise starting and finishing dates.**
- **Arrange for the usual prescriber to review the patient as soon as possible thereafter.**
- **Document details of the consultations and pharmacotherapy prescriptions in the patient's notes.**

## Circumstances where a notification of treatment is not required

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There are some circumstances where a prescriber does not require a permit to prescribe pharmacotherapy.

A permit is not required where a prescriber is treating a patient if that patient is:

- an inpatient being treated in a hospital
- a prisoner being treated in a prison for the period in prison and a period not exceeding seven (7) days after that prisoner's release from custody
- a resident being treated in an aged care service.

In these circumstances, prescribers are required to submit a Notification of drug dependent person (available at [www.health.vic.gov.au/dpcs/pharm.htm](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/dpcs/pharm.htm)) to indicate their intention to treat the patient with pharmacotherapy.

Prescribers may start prescribing provided the notification is submitted as soon as practicable to the Department of Health and Human Services

## In summary

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If a course of opioid is being prescribed for a period > 8 weeks then a permit IS required unless the patient has terminal cancer, is in prison or in a hospital

In all other cases an S8 permit is required, or an ORT permit

DPRG Tel: 1300 364 545 Fax: 1300 360 830 (1000-1600 Monday-Friday)

Online forms at: <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/drugs-and-poisons/smart-forms-drugs-and-poisons>

DACAS 1800 812 804