

Image based prescriptions

Medicines and Poisons Act 2019 – August 2023

Information for prescribers and dispensers

Requirements for prescribers sending faxed prescriptions or digital images of prescriptions

A paper prescription must meet all the requirements specified in the Medicines and Poisons (Medicines) Regulation 2021 (MPMR), for a lawful prescription, **including a hand-written signature** (section 85, MPMR). The paper prescription may be sent to the patient's pharmacy of choice by facsimile or as a digital image such as a photo or a scanned image (e.g. a pdf). The prescriber must, as soon as practicable, **send** the original paper prescription to the pharmacist within the specified timeframes stated in section 84(4) of the MPMR, being:

- for S8 medicines, *no later than the end of the next business day* after the digital image was sent;
- for other medicines, *no later than 7 days* after the digital image was sent.

Prescribers may fax or email digital images of paper prescriptions to the pharmacy of the patient's choice however, the prescriber **must send** the original paper prescription to the pharmacy. Prescribers may consider obtaining a proof of posting when sending original paper prescriptions for record keeping purposes.

Facsimiles and digital images of prescriptions may only be sent to a pharmacy and **must not** be provided to patients. A digital image of a prescription provided by a patient to the pharmacist is **not a lawful prescription**.

Prescriptions for diversion-risk medicines

If the prescription is for a diversion-risk medicine, the prescriber must annotate the prescription with the name of the pharmacy to which they are sending the prescription, the way it will be transmitted (e.g. by fax or email) and the date on which it is sent. Diversion-risk medicines are listed in Schedule 2, Part 3 of the MPMR and include all S8 medicines, benzodiazepines, pregabalin, tramadol, codeine, anabolic steroids and appetite suppressants such as phentermine.

Requirements for pharmacists on receipt of a faxed copy or a digital image of a prescription for a diversion-risk medicine

Prior to dispensing prescriptions for diversion-risk medicines, pharmacists are obliged to confirm the bona fides of the prescription, including that it was written and sent by an authorised prescriber. Pharmacists may meet this obligation if they are able to demonstrate that they are familiar with information on the prescription, for example the signature and contact details (e.g. email address, fax number) of the prescriber. Otherwise, pharmacists must take reasonable steps to confirm prescriptions, such as phoning the prescriber (preferably on an independently obtained phone number) or checking the monitored medicines database to see if the prescription was made by the prescriber and has not already been dispensed. Pharmacists should document the steps taken.

For further information contact:

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A term used in this factsheet that is defined in the MP Act or the MPMR has the meaning as stated in the *Medicines and Poisons Act 2019* or MPMR.