

Changes to QScript look-up and Monitored Medicines Standard requirements

Overview of changes commencing on 1 July 2024

Queensland's medicines legislation is changing!

Changes to the [Medicines and Poisons \(Medicines\) Regulation 2021](#) impact mandatory QScript look-up requirements and the Monitored Medicines Standard from 1 July 2024.

On 24 April 2024, Queensland's Governor in Council approved the [Medicines and Poisons \(Medicines\) Amendment Regulation 2024](#), which amends the Medicines and Poisons (Medicines) Regulation 2021 to—among other things:

- exempt relevant practitioners from the requirement to check QScript in specified low-risk circumstances; and
- give effect to a new version of the Monitored Medicines Standard.

Under [Section 41](#) of the *Medicines and Poisons Act 2019* (MPA), '[relevant practitioners](#)' (dentists, medical practitioners, nurse practitioners, endorsed midwives, pharmacists, intern pharmacists, endorsed podiatrists and podiatric surgeons) are required to check QScript—the 'monitored medicines database' referred to in the legislation—before prescribing, dispensing or giving a treatment dose of a monitored medicine for a patient, unless they have a reasonable excuse or are exempted by regulation.

Separately, under [Section 93](#) and [Section 126](#) of the Medicines and Poisons (Medicines) Regulation 2021, all prescribers and dispensers must comply with the departmental standard 'Monitored medicines' (the '[Monitored Medicines Standard](#)') when prescribing a monitored medicine for dispensing or for giving a treatment dose, or when dispensing a monitored medicine for a patient, unless they have a reasonable excuse.

This fact sheet outlines four key points about the changes to QScript look-up requirements and the Monitored Medicines Standard.

1 Changes to mandatory QScript look-up requirements and the Monitored Medicines Standard come into effect on **1 July 2024**.

From 1 July 2024, relevant practitioners are exempted from the mandatory requirement to check QScript in the following circumstances:

- If they are **prescribing or dispensing** a monitored medicine for a patient being treated at a hospital—AND—the monitored medicine is to be administered to the patient whilst the patient is at the hospital.
- If they are **prescribing, dispensing or giving a treatment dose** of a monitored medicine for a patient:
 - being treated at an aged care facility;
 - being treated at a custodial facility (corrective services facility, detention centre or watchhouse)—AND—the monitored medicine is to be administered to or taken by the patient whilst the patient is detained (whether or not at the custodial facility);
 - being treated urgently in an emergency;
 - assessed, under the *Voluntary Assisted Dying Act 2021*, by a consulting practitioner as eligible for access to voluntary assisted dying;
 - who has a life expectancy of less than 12 months; or
 - being given palliative care.
- If they are **prescribing a monitored medicine for administration to a patient by an authorised person** in a circumstance not otherwise mentioned above.

This exemption will only apply if the prescriber is directing an authorised person to [administer](#) a monitored medicine directly to a patient—i.e. the medicine will not be dispensed and the patient will not be in possession of the medicine. Rather, the medicine will be administered directly to the patient, by an authorised person other than the prescriber e.g. a registered nurse.

Please note that relevant practitioners continue to be required to check QScript:

- before *prescribing a monitored medicine to be [dispensed](#)*—e.g. a general practitioner writing a prescription for a monitored medicine to be dispensed at a pharmacy and
- before *prescribing a monitored medicine to be [given as a treatment dose](#)*—e.g. a specialist plastic surgeon at a hospital instructing a Junior House Officer to give a patient being discharged two days' supply of a monitored medicine for the patient to consume over the two days post-discharge

unless another exemption applies, or the prescriber has a reasonable excuse.

[A new version of the Monitored Medicines Standard](#) also comes into effect on 1 July 2024. The new Standard has a reduced scope and only applies to monitored medicine treatment provided to patients registered on the Queensland Opioid Treatment Program.

2 Relevant practitioners continue to be able to voluntarily check QScript.

Relevant practitioners continue to be able to check QScript voluntarily at any time to inform their therapeutic treatment of patients or to comply with requirements under the MPA applying to them (other than Section 41 of the MPA).

‘Low risk’ does not mean ‘no risk’

Although Queensland Health has identified the exempted circumstances as presenting ‘low risk’ for monitored medicine-related harm, this does not mean they present no risks. Relevant practitioners must apply professional judgement when assessing and managing health risks for each patient; this may necessitate checking QScript, even if the practitioner is not mandated to do so under the MPA.

3 There are **no changes** to QScript notifications, alerts or prescription data upload requirements.

- Practitioners using clinical software integrated with QScript will continue to receive notifications and alerts for high-risk clinical scenarios when prescribing or dispensing a monitored medicine. Note that red and amber pop-up notifications will continue to display the words ‘Check QScript’, irrespective of whether a look-up exemption applies. Remember ‘low risk’ does not mean ‘no risk’!
- All health practitioners dispensing monitored medicines (other than those practising in public sector hospitals) continue to be required to upload monitored medicine dispensing records to QScript. There is no requirement for prescribers to upload monitored medicine prescribing records to QScript.

4 Further details and guidance about the changes is available on the Queensland Health website.

New and updated content has been published on Queensland Health’s [QScript landing page](#) and the MPA [Fact sheets and supporting documents](#) page to:

- ensure practitioners understand the new legislative requirements
- assist practitioners in identifying when QScript look-up exemptions apply
- support and promote good professional practice regarding the voluntary use of QScript in exempted circumstances

- provide an overview of the compliance monitoring and enforcement strategy for the new requirements.

More information

For information about the legislative changes, please view:

- [QScript exemptions: Frequently asked questions](#)
- [Changes to the Monitored Medicines Standard: Frequently asked questions](#)
- the [Medicines and Poisons \(Medicines\) Amendment Regulation 2024](#) and associated [Explanatory Notes](#)

For further information about the changes described in this fact sheet, please contact the Monitored Medicines and Compliance Unit, Health Protection and Regulation Branch, Queensland Public Health and Scientific Services at MMCU@health.qld.gov.au

Version control

Version	Date	Comments
1.0	26 Apr 2024	—
1.1	9 May 2024	Clarifying details added to 'prescribing a monitored medicine for administration' exemption dot-point on page 2 to remove potential ambiguity around when the exemption will apply.
1.2	30 May 2024	Links inserted to 'Changes to the Monitored Medicines Standard: Frequently asked questions' guide.
1.3	21 Jun 2024	Link inserted to 'QScript look-up exemptions: Frequently asked questions' guide. Minor language updates made.