

# Drug Therapy Protocol – Communicable Diseases Program

## Fact sheet

### Preamble

In response to the public health emergency relating to coronavirus (COVID-19), a special authority has been granted to healthcare workers to provide patients identified as being exposed or potentially exposed to an infectious condition with timely access to medical and pharmacological treatment.

This authority is in the form of the Drug Therapy Protocol (DTP) – Communicable Diseases Program, which is effective as at 27 March 2020 and will remain in effect for the duration of the declared public health emergency unless revoked or replaced earlier.

This fact sheet must be read in conjunction with the Health (Drugs and Poisons) Regulation 1996 (HDPR) and the DTP – Communicable Diseases Program to ensure all regulatory requirements are met.

### Background

On 29 January 2020, under the *Public Health Act 2005*, the Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services made an order declaring a public health emergency in relation to coronavirus disease (COVID-19), which is affecting all of Queensland.

The HDPR provides for the activation of the DTP – Communicable Diseases Program in a declared public health emergency relating to an infectious medical condition.

### Healthcare workers

The DTP – Communicable Diseases Program applies to the following healthcare workers:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners <sup>1</sup>
- Indigenous health workers <sup>2</sup>
- Pharmacists
- Queensland Ambulance Service – Ambulance Officers
- Registered Nurses

It is important to note that this DTP does not relieve healthcare workers from their legal responsibility or accountability and their obligation to comply with all relevant laws, including the HDPR.

### Authorisation

The DTP – Communicable Diseases Program applies to restricted drugs (Schedule 4 (S4) medicines or Prescription only medicines). The DTP authorises the listed healthcare workers to administer and supply specified antivirals and vaccines, and pharmacists and registered nurses to supply specified restricted drugs, in accordance with the conditions.

---

<sup>1</sup> In an isolated practice area in either a Hospital and Health Service or an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander community-controlled health service

<sup>2</sup> In an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander community in an isolated practice area

Authorised antivirals and vaccines and route of administration are:

- Oseltamivir (oral)
- Zanamivir (inhalation)
- Influenza Vaccine (according to Australian Immunisation Handbook)
- Coronavirus Vaccine (as per the product information in which age limits may apply)

While there is currently no vaccination available for COVID-19, the DTP – Communicable Diseases Program has included a COVID-19 vaccination in anticipation of one becoming available to prevent any delay to access.

## Antivirals and Vaccines

During the COVID-19 pandemic the following healthcare workers, as part of their duties and within the restrictions/conditions stated under the DTP – Communicable Diseases Program, are authorised to do the following:

Healthcare worker	Regulated activity	Restricted drug
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oseltamivir</li> <li>• Zanamivir</li> <li>• Influenza Vaccine</li> <li>• Coronavirus Vaccine</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supply</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oseltamivir</li> <li>• Zanamivir</li> </ul>
Indigenous health workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oseltamivir</li> <li>• Zanamivir</li> <li>• Influenza Vaccine</li> <li>• Coronavirus Vaccine</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supply</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oseltamivir</li> <li>• Zanamivir</li> </ul>
Pharmacist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oseltamivir</li> <li>• Zanamivir</li> <li>• Coronavirus Vaccine</li> <li>• Note: The Drug Therapy Protocol – Pharmacist Vaccination Program and Queensland Pharmacist Vaccination Standard contain the range of vaccines (including influenza vaccine) permitted to be administered by pharmacists and the associated conditions / requirements.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supply</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oseltamivir</li> <li>• Zanamivir</li> </ul>
Ambulance Officer P1 and P2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Obtain</li> <li>• Possess</li> <li>• Administer</li> <li>• Supply</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oseltamivir</li> <li>• Zanamivir</li> </ul>

Healthcare worker	Regulated activity	Restricted drug
Ambulance Officer P3, P3 (ECP) and P4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Obtain</li> <li>Possess</li> <li>Administer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Osetamivir</li> <li>Zanamivir</li> <li>Influenza Vaccine</li> <li>Coronavirus Vaccine</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supply</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Osetamivir</li> <li>Zanamivir</li> </ul>
Registered Nurse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Obtain</li> <li>Administer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Osetamivir</li> <li>Zanamivir</li> <li>Influenza Vaccine</li> <li>Coronavirus Vaccine</li> <li>Note: A registered nurse who does not hold a current immunisation qualification can only administer immunisations under the DTP – Communicable Diseases Program.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supply</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Osetamivir</li> <li>Zanamivir</li> </ul>

## Conditions and Restrictions

To ensure patient safety the following conditions and restrictions must be followed:

- The restricted drugs, as listed, may only be administered or supplied to or for persons identified as being exposed or potentially exposed to an infectious medical condition;
- The medicines can only be administered by the route of administration and under the restrictions/conditions as specified in the DTP – Communicable Diseases Program;
- Health workers undertaking an action authorised under this Drug Therapy Protocol must act within their own scope of practice;
- A current online version of the Australian Immunisation Handbook must be available to the health professionals who have authority to administer the influenza vaccine;
- All health professionals under this DTP must be familiar with the contraindications and known side effects of the restricted drug and advise the patient prior to administration or supply;
- Where practicable, Consumer Medicine Information should be given to a patient by the health professional who is administering or supplying the medicine;
- Entities must have policies and procedures in place and available to staff that cover the following:
  - The indication for treatment, dose, method of administration and duration of use.
  - Pre-assessment processes, which include escalation and referral points.
  - Obtaining documented consent from the patient prior to administration of the restricted drug.
  - The equipment and management procedures in the event of an emergency associated with the use of the restricted drug, e.g. immediate response to anaphylaxis.
  - Monitoring and reporting adverse events.
  - Storage of the restricted drug for example, maintaining cold chain for vaccines.
  - Labelling the restricted drug supplied according to section 198 of the HDPR.
  - Information for patients that includes instructions relating to how the medicine is used and when to seek assistance.

- Record keeping according to section 207(2)-(5) of the HDPR
- Processes to ensure episodes of supply are communicated to a supplied person's treating or regular prescribing health practitioner.

## Additional supply authorisation – Pharmacists

To facilitate the continuity of care during the COVID-19 pandemic, in addition to the above a pharmacist has been authorised under the DTP – Communicable Diseases Program to:

- Supply a substituted restricted drug when the person's regular medicine is under a Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) [Serious Shortage Substitution Notice](#); and
- Supply a restricted drug without a prescription when it is the person's regular medicine.

## Supply under a Therapeutic Goods Administration Serious Shortage Substitution Notice

If the pharmacist is unable to obtain the required restricted drug, and the pharmacist has made a reasonable effort to contact the prescriber before deciding to make the substitution, the pharmacist is authorised to supply an alternative restricted drug as per a Serious Shortage Substitution Notice developed and published by the TGA, providing that the patient consents to the supply of the alternative restricted drug. Serious Shortage Substitution Notices are published on the TGA website:

<https://www.tga.gov.au/serious-shortage-medicine-substitution-notices>

## Supply of regular medicines

A pharmacist may supply a restricted drug to a person, without a prescription, where the pharmacist reasonably believes that:

- It is not practicable for the person to obtain a prescription for the restricted drug from an authorised prescriber; and
- That the person seeking the drug is under medical treatment requiring the use of the drug; and
- The drug has previously been prescribed for the treatment; and
- It is essential to continue the treatment for the person's wellbeing.

## Conditions

Each episode of supply must be communicated by the pharmacist to the person's treating or regular prescribing health practitioner (e.g. usual doctor or nurse practitioner) as soon as practicable, but at least within seven days of the supply event.

A restricted drug may only be supplied under this authority if the quantity supplied is no more than:

- For a restricted drug that is on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, the standard Pharmaceutical Benefits maximum quantity; or
- For a restricted drug that is not on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, the quantity that is contained in the smallest standard pack in which the restricted drug is generally available.
- The pharmacist must maintain records of each episode of supply, including any attempts to contact the prescriber.

The pharmacist must comply with a quality standard for supply of medicines, such as the Pharmacy Board dispensing guidelines, pharmacy peak body professional practice standards and Quality Care Pharmacy Program.

## Existing emergency and continued supply provisions

The usual provisions for dispensing or supplying without a paper or electronic prescription under the HDPR are also available to pharmacists. These include:

- A prescriber may direct a pharmacist to dispense a Schedule 8 or Schedule 4 medicine to a patient, by providing a telephone order (an oral prescription) or by sending an acceptable electronic copy or digital image of a prescription.
- A pharmacist may supply a three-day supply of Schedule 4 medicine without a prescription, if the pharmacist reasonably believes that an emergency exists, the person seeking the medicine is under medical treatment requiring the use of the medicine and it is essential to continue treatment for the person's wellbeing.
- A pharmacist may also supply a single PBS quantity of medicines specified in the Commonwealth's Continued Dispensing Determinations (either the [2012 determination](#) or the [2020 Emergency Measures determination](#)) in accordance with the determination.

## Additional supply authorisation – Registered Nurses

In addition to the antivirals and vaccines in the table on page 3, a registered nurse practising in a Hospital and Health Service or a detention centre, hospital, nursing home or prison is authorised to supply or administer a medicine that is a restricted drug under the following conditions:

- In accordance with the protocol for treatment of a condition in the current edition of the Primary Clinical Care Manual (PCCM).
- The registered nurse must be credentialed by their facility in accordance with the current:
  - Health Service Directive: Credentialing and defining the scope of clinical practice; or
  - Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care Standard for Credentialing and Defining the Scope of Clinical Practice.

Each episode of supply must be communicated by the registered nurse to the person's treating or regular prescribing health practitioner (e.g. doctor or nurse practitioner) as soon as practicable, but no later than seven days after the supply event.

The registered nurse must maintain a record of each episode of supply in accordance with the record keeping requirements in section 207(2)-(5) of the HDPR.

All medicines supplied must be labelled according to section 198 of the HDPR.

All medicines must be stored according to section 211 of the HDPR.

## Further information

The [DTP – Communicable Diseases Program is available on the Queensland Health webpage](#).

**Is the supply of a restricted drug (Schedule 4 medicine) by a pharmacist under the DTP – Communicable Diseases Program claimable on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS)?**

The DTP enables pharmacists to supply restricted drugs under the listed conditions in Queensland. If the supply meets the requirements for Continued Dispensing, the supply could be authorised under the Determination rather than the DTP and qualify for PBS reimbursement. The Emergency Measures determination includes a broad range of medicines including Schedule 8 medicines. For more information:

[Education guide - Continued Dispensing Initiative - PBS requirements](#)