

# Monitored Medicines

Legal obligations for prescribers and dispensers related to QScript and the Monitored Medicines Standard

## What are monitored medicines?

The [Medicines and Poisons Act 2019](#) refers to a list of 'monitored medicines' that have a recognised therapeutic use but may also present a high risk of physical, mental and social harms. 'Monitored medicines' are:

- all schedule 8 medicines (e.g. opioids, alprazolam, nabiximols, dexamfetamine)
- the following schedule 4 medicines:
  - all benzodiazepines
  - all codeine-containing products
  - tramadol
  - zolpidem
  - zopiclone
  - gabapentin
  - pregabalin
  - quetiapine.

## What are my legal obligations?

It is Queensland Health's responsibility to regulate access to and encourage the safe use of monitored medicines. To assist health practitioners in prescribing and dispensing monitored medicines, Queensland Health has established:

- a real-time prescription monitoring system, known as **QScript**
- a departmental standard, known as the **Monitored Medicines Standard**.

The *Medicines and Poisons Act 2019* specifies penalties that can be imposed if a health practitioner does not check QScript or comply with the Monitored Medicines Standard when required, without a reasonable excuse.

## Checking QScript

QScript is Queensland's real-time prescription monitoring system, providing easily accessible monitored medicine prescription information at the point of care.

## Who must check QScript?

Per [section 41](#) of the *Medicines and Poisons Act 2019*, the following ‘relevant practitioners’ are required to check QScript in certain circumstances:

- medical practitioners
- pharmacists and intern pharmacists
- nurse practitioners
- endorsed midwives
- dentists
- podiatric surgeons and endorsed podiatrists.

## When must QScript be checked?

Relevant practitioners are required to check QScript:

- **before [prescribing](#) a monitored medicine for a patient**—including when prescribing for administration (e.g. in a hospital ward, prison, or residential facility)
- **before [giving a treatment dose](#) of a monitored medicine to a patient**
- **before [dispensing](#) a monitored medicine for a patient**—including when dispensing from community and hospital pharmacies.

For health practitioners using QScript-compatible clinical software, QScript will display pop-up notifications when prescribing or dispensing a monitored medicine:

- A **red notification** indicates one or more high-risk clinical scenarios have been identified.
- An **amber notification** indicates a matching patient record has been found in QScript, but no high-risk clinical scenario has been identified.
- A **green notification** indicates that no matching patient record has been found, and no high-risk clinical scenario has been identified.

For **red** and **amber notifications**, relevant practitioners must view the patient record in QScript to fulfill their legislative requirements to check QScript.

For **green notifications**, there is no requirement to check the patient record in QScript; the display of a green notification means the relevant practitioner has fulfilled their legislative obligation to check QScript.

Relevant practitioners who do not use QScript-compatible clinical software must access QScript through the web-based portal at [www.qscript.health.qld.gov.au](http://www.qscript.health.qld.gov.au) and search for and review the relevant patient’s record to ensure they meet their legislative obligations.

## How is QScript accessed?

QScript requires an internet connection and can be accessed:

- via pop-up notifications when prescribing or dispensing a monitored medicine (if using QScript-compatible clinical software)—simply click on the link in the notification
- via the web-based portal [www.qscript.health.qld.gov.au](http://www.qscript.health.qld.gov.au)—available on computers, laptops, tablets and smartphones.

Health practitioners using Queensland Health desktop devices can download and install the *QScript Health Practitioner Portal Shortcut*, through the Queensland Health Software Center (search 'QScript' in the Applications tab). Once installed, the QScript shortcut will be available on your Start Menu.

## The Monitored Medicines Standard

The Monitored Medicines Standard (MMS) is a legal instrument which outlines the minimum requirements that Queensland prescribers and dispensers must comply with if prescribing a monitored medicine for dispensing or giving a treatment dose for a patient, or if dispensing a monitored medicine for a patient. These requirements aim to ensure the prescribing and dispensing of monitored medicines for patients is clinically justified, safe and appropriate.

Some healthcare facilities may already have policies and procedures in place that meet some of the MMS requirements. These should be regularly checked to ensure they maintain currency with legislative requirements.

### Who must comply with the MMS?

All persons authorised to prescribe or dispense a monitored medicine must comply with the MMS.

Where there are multiple dispensers involved in dispensing a monitored medicine for a patient, the dispenser who makes the dispensing record must comply with the MMS.

### When is compliance with the MMS required?

#### When prescribing a monitored medicine for supply (to be dispensed or given as a treatment dose)

A prescriber **must comply** with the MMS if they prescribe a monitored medicine for supply (to be dispensed or given as a treatment dose) for a patient:

- whether prescribing orally or in writing
- irrespective of whether the patient ordinarily resides in Queensland or another jurisdiction
- irrespective of the treatment setting e.g. community, hospital, residential aged care facility, prison etc.

Examples of when a prescriber would need to comply with the MMS include:

- A general practitioner writes a prescription for a monitored medicine that is to be dispensed by a pharmacist.
- A medical practitioner in a hospital writes a post-operative discharge prescription for three days' supply of a monitored medicine to be dispensed by a pharmacist.
- A nurse practitioner in a prison setting directs a registered nurse to provide a patient with five days' worth of a monitored medicine (give a treatment dose) on the patient's discharge from prison.

A prescriber **does not have to comply** with the MMS if prescribing a monitored medicine:

- to be [administered](#) to a patient—e.g. when writing up an order on a hospital medication chart for a monitored medicine to be administered to a patient or when orally directing another health practitioner to administer a monitored medicine to a patient
- for an animal.

## When dispensing a monitored medicine

A dispenser **must comply** with the MMS if they dispense a monitored medicine for a patient:

- irrespective of whether the prescription was an oral or written prescription
- irrespective of whether the monitored medicine was prescribed in Queensland or another jurisdiction
- for each occasion a monitored medicine is dispensed (including each individual repeat prescription that is dispensed).

Examples of when a dispenser would need to comply with the MMS include:

- A pharmacist receives an oral or written monitored medicine prescription, processes it, and supplies the medicine to a patient (sells it on prescription).
- A pharmacist dispenses a monitored medicine on a repeat prescription.
- A medical practitioner dispenses a monitored medicine on prescription from another medical practitioner.

A dispenser **does not have to comply** with the MMS if a dispenser:

- gives a dispensed monitored medicine to a patient under staged supply arrangements i.e. provides dispensed medicines to a patient in instalments as per the prescriber's instructions—e.g. if after initially dispensing a monitored medicine a pharmacist provides the medicine to the patient in instalments via daily supervised dosing, compliance with the MMS would only be required when the medicine was initially dispensed
- dispenses a monitored medicine for an animal.

# Where can I access further information?

## QScript

- **QScript landing page** for links to QScript registration, training and login: [www.qscript.health.qld.gov.au](http://www.qscript.health.qld.gov.au)
- **Queensland Health QScript website** for general information about QScript for health practitioners: [www.health.qld.gov.au/qscript](http://www.health.qld.gov.au/qscript)
- **QScript Learning portal** for online education (including webinars and videos) about legislative requirements, how to use the QScript system and clinical best practice on monitored medicines and how to best prescribe and dispense them in practice: [www.qscriptlearn.health.qld.gov.au](http://www.qscriptlearn.health.qld.gov.au)
- **QScript help topics** for comprehensive information to help health practitioners use QScript: <https://help.qscript.health.qld.gov.au/qld-hp.htm>
- **Technical support for QScript:** call 1800 776 633 or email [it.qscript@health.qld.gov.au](mailto:it.qscript@health.qld.gov.au)
- **General questions about QScript:** email the Monitored Medicines Unit at [MMU@health.qld.gov.au](mailto:MMU@health.qld.gov.au)

## Monitored Medicines Standard (MMS)

- **Monitored Medicines Standard:** [https://www.health.qld.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0029/1108937/ds-monitored-medicines.pdf](https://www.health.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0029/1108937/ds-monitored-medicines.pdf)
- **MMS Companion Document** for assistance in complying with the MMS, including general information, guidance aligning to each minimum requirement, and examples of how compliance could potentially be demonstrated: [https://www.health.qld.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0014/1111721/monitored-med-stand-companion.pdf](https://www.health.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0014/1111721/monitored-med-stand-companion.pdf)
- **Checklists and fact sheets** to support health practitioners in understanding and complying with the MMS: <https://www.health.qld.gov.au/system-governance/licences/medicines-poisons/medicines-poisons-act/supporting-documents>

## Medicines and Poisons Act 2019

- **Information about the new legislative framework** including links to fact sheets and supporting documents: <https://www.health.qld.gov.au/system-governance/licences/medicines-poisons/medicines-poisons-act>
- **Medicines, poisons and pest management information:** <https://www.health.qld.gov.au/system-governance/licences/medicines-poisons>

# Contact

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