

# **Who can prescribe medicines in Western Australia?**

Prescribing is an iterative process involving information gathering, clinical decision making, communication and evaluation that results in the initiation, continuation or cessation of a medicine.

A prescription is a written direction to instruct another health practitioner to dispense supply a medicine. This is closely related to a direction that instructs another practitioner to administer a medicine to a patient, including the use of medication charts in hospitals.

## General rules

Only health professionals authorised under the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law, and acting in the lawful practice of their profession, can prescribe medicines. Who and what can be prescribed varies by profession and classification of the medicine.

Medicines are classified into different Schedules depending on risk and the level of control required to protect public health and safety. These classifications include:

* Schedule 2 (Pharmacy Medicine);
* Schedule 3 (Pharmacist only Medicine);
* Schedule 4 (Prescription Only Medicine); and
* Schedule 8 (S8) (Controlled Drug).

Schedule 4 and Schedule 8 medicines may only be dispensed by a pharmacist on receipt of a current, valid, prescription from an authorised prescriber. The pharmacist must supply exactly what is ordered on the document.

## Doctors, dentists, veterinary surgeons and nurse practitioners

Doctors, dentists, veterinary surgeons and nurse practitioners are authorised to prescribe and supply Scheduled medicines in the practice of their profession.

Dentists can prescribe and supply Scheduled medicines for dental treatment. Veterinary surgeons can prescribe and supply Scheduled medicines for animal treatment.

Any prescribing must be consistent with lawful scope of practice. Veterinary surgeons cannot prescribe for human use.

## Endorsed optometrists, podiatrists and midwives

An optometrist, podiatrist or midwife whose registration is ‘endorsed for scheduled medicines’ under the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law, is authorised to prescribe Schedule 4 medicines. Prescribing must be within usual scope for the practitioner and their class of registration.

The prescribing of Scheduled medicines by endorsed practitioners must comply with any relevant National Board approved medication list or formulary. This may restrict prescribing by indication, dose, route of administration, duration of therapy, or other circumstances.

## Valid prescriptions

Prescriptions may be written by hand, generated through a computer system and then printed, or prescribed through an approved electronic prescribing system.

Prescriptions must be personally written or produced electronically by the prescriber. Handwritten scripts must be in ink, in the prescribers own handwriting. All hard copy prescriptions must be signed.

Prescriptions must contain all required pieces of information to be a valid prescription. Schedule 8 prescriptions must contain the additional information necessary for these medicines.

## Ordering medicines for practice use

If Scheduled medicines are required for use at the practitioner’s place of practice, these can be obtained through a written requisition (e.g. “doctor’s bag”) order to a pharmacy, or otherwise, through a pharmaceutical or veterinary wholesaler.

## Schedule 8 medicines (Controlled Drugs)

An authorised prescriber may administer a S8 medicine to a patient at any time, except in the treatment of dependence. Prior authorisation or approval from the Department of Health is required to administer, prescribe or supply a person who is drug dependent.

The prescribing of all S8 medicines must comply with the *Schedule 8 Medicines Prescribing Code (the Code).* Practitioners may not self-prescribe Schedule 8 medicines.

Doctors, dentists, nurse practitioners and veterinary surgeons are authorised to prescribe S8 medicines. Specific approvals are required, in advance for Schedule 8 medicines that are:

* Stimulants;
* Cannabis-Based Products; and
* Opioid pharmacotherapy for the treatment of dependence.

Dentists and nurse practitioners may prescribe S8 medicines for acute treatment, of no longer than 14 days duration. After this time, authority must be obtained from the Department of Health to continue for each individual patient.

Endorsed podiatric surgeons can prescribe S8 medicines, for podiatric practice, but are limited to those on the Medicines List published by the Podiatry Board of Australia.

Endorsed midwives can administer S8 medicines to patients under their care, but are not authorised to write prescriptions for dispensing by a pharmacist

**Emergency supply**

In an emergency, an authorised prescriber may instruct a pharmacist to dispense a medicine, by providing a direction to do so by verbal or other means. In these cases, the practitioner must send a document (prescription) as confirmation of this instruction within 24 hours.

## Summary

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| **Profession** | **Medicine Schedule** | | | | |
| **2** | **3** | **4** | | **8** |
| Medical practitioner | Authorised to prescribe all Scheduled medicines and S8 medicines in line with the S8 prescribing Code or when approved by the Department of Health | | | | |
| Dentist | Authorised to prescribe all Scheduled medicines for dental treatment and S8 medicines for acute dental treatment. | | | | |
| Veterinary surgeon | NA - “Over the Counter” animal treatments are classified as Schedule 5 and Schedule 6 poisons | | | Authorised to prescribe all Scheduled medicines for animal treatment. | |
| Nurse practitioner | Authorised to prescribe Scheduled medicines, within professional and personal scope of practice, and S8 medicines for acute treatment, unless otherwise approved. | | | | |
| Endorsed optometrist | Authorised to prescribe according to [*Endorsement for scheduled medicines registration*](file:///\\hdwa.health.wa.gov.au\shared\Pharmacy\EPG\EHD\Pharm\Typing\Policy%20and%20Projects\Website\Medicines%20and%20Poisons%202017%20website%20update\RLINK%20%22http:\www.optometryboard.gov.au\Registration-Standards.aspx%22%20www.optometryboard.gov.au\Registration-Standards.aspxdard). | | | | NA |
| Endorsed podiatrist / podiatric surgeon | Authorised to prescribe according to [*Endorsement for scheduled medicines*](http://www.podiatryboard.gov.au/Registration-Endorsement/Endorsement-Scheduled-Medicines.aspx)*.* | | | | |
| Endorsed midwife | Authorised to prescribe according to the [*Prescribing Formulary*](http://www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au/Registration-and-Endorsement/Endorsements-) | | | | Administration only |

## Where can I get more information?

Contact the Medicines and Poisons Regulation Branch on (08) 9222 6883 from Monday to Friday 8.30am to 4.30pm.