



Improving Access to Medicines – ongoing access to medicines during COVID-19

The Australian Government is ensuring ongoing access to essential and life-saving medicines during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Government has fast-tracked implementation of electronic prescribing (ePrescribing) to allow doctors to prepare and electronically share a prescription with a patient's preferred pharmacy, which can then deliver medicines to their home.

The COVID-19 Home Medicines Service is being extended until 31 March 2021. This supports community pharmacies to remotely fill Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) and Repatriation Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (RPBS) prescriptions and provide free delivery of medication to the homes of vulnerable patients or patients who are in home isolation, helping reduce their risk of exposure to the coronavirus.

Australians who are unable to visit their doctor to access a new prescription can also benefit once per year from the expanded list of eligible PBS medicines that can be dispensed without a prescription under Continued Dispensing Arrangements until 31 March 2021.

Why is this important?

COVID-19 has presented many challenges to the provision of health services.

Australians isolating in their homes due to COVID-19 need to have reliable and flexible access to critical medicines and pharmaceutical therapies.

These measures are informed by, and support, the Government's Coronavirus National Health Plan, to ensure Australians have the support they need throughout this pandemic and that we remain prepared across the country.

Who will benefit?

Improved access to essential and lifesaving medicines through these arrangements, particularly home delivery of medicines, will benefit Australians who are particularly vulnerable to coronavirus (COVID-19), including:

- those advised to isolate at home because of suspected or confirmed COVID-19 infection
- Australians over 70 years old
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people over the age of 50
- those living with chronic health conditions or who are immunocompromised
- pregnant women and families with newborn babies.

How much will this cost?

This will cost \$30 million from 2019–20 to 2020–21.