



# Fact Sheet – National Health Plan A Guide for Prescribers

Arrangements for prescriptions for supply of medicines: Supporting telehealth patients and healthcare professionals

18/08/2021

Arrangements for image-based prescribing implemented at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic will cease on 30 September 2021. Electronic prescribing is now widely available in Australia and provides an option for supporting telehealth consultations and enabling supply of medicines. Other prescribing options, such as urgent supply arrangements which existed prior to the COVID-19 pandemic also remain available.<sup>1</sup>

## Medical services for patients confined to their homes

Doctors, nurses and mental health professionals are able to deliver services via telehealth via phone or video conferencing. More information on telehealth is available [here](#).

## Prescribing process to support telehealth services

There are two legal forms of prescription in Australia – electronic prescriptions and paper prescriptions.

### Electronic prescriptions

As a prescriber, you can create an electronic prescription in your prescriber software during a consultation. A unique electronic token (in the form of a QR code) will be created and sent to the patient as an SMS or email. The token is the key that unlocks the electronic prescriptions. Patients can provide the token to the pharmacists to enable dispense and supply of the medicines. Further information can be found [here](#).

Electronic prescription tokens sent to a patient via SMS will continue to be subsidised by the Department of Health until 30 June 2022.

### Paper prescriptions

Prescribers can still create paper prescriptions during a telehealth consultation. The paper prescription will need to be signed by the prescriber. You may also use a valid digital signature until 31 December 2021.

While image-based prescribing is ending, in some jurisdictions you may still be able to fax a copy of the paper prescription to the patient's pharmacy of choice. You must then

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<sup>1</sup> A summary of State and Territory arrangements, including links to relevant legislation, is available [here](#).

arrange for the timely delivery of the original paper prescription to the pharmacy. (Contact details for the pharmacy of the patient's choice is available [here](#))

If your patient prefers to receive the legal paper prescription you will need to mail it to them.

### **Other options**

While image-based prescribing arrangements will no longer be legally valid after 30 September 2021, you will continue to have other options such as urgent supply to enable remote medicines support for your patients.

### **Special arrangements in jurisdictions**

Specific legislation and options to assist in each jurisdiction also continue to apply. Please contact your respective pharmacy authority for more details. Further information can be found [here](#).

### **Medicine delivery services**

Once the patient's chosen pharmacy has received the electronic or paper prescription, the pharmacy may deliver medicines to the address on the prescription. Prescribers should check that they have the correct address for patients during the telehealth consultation.

### **Signing for receipt of a prescription**

While image-based prescribing arrangements will cease on 30 September 2021, patients are still not required to sign to acknowledge receipt of supply if it is not practical for them to do so. The pharmacist may sign on behalf of the patient unless it is not practical for them to do so. This interim arrangement will continue along with temporary telehealth arrangements until 31 December 2021, to help prevent the transmission of COVID-19.

### **Existing prescriptions and repeats**

Patients confined to their homes during COVID-19 with paper prescriptions or repeats will need someone to visit the pharmacy on their behalf with the paper prescription. If this is not possible, patients can seek a new prescription and follow the steps above.