

Frequently Asked Questions: Controlled Drugs Prescribing

- **Where do I find information on the classes of controlled drugs and their restrictions?**

This information is provided in full in the schedules to the [Misuse of Drugs Act 1985](#) ("the Act"), accessible via the New Zealand legislation website (www.legislation.govt.nz).

- **Which controlled drugs need to be written on a triplicate controlled drugs prescription form (H572)?**

If intended for human use:

- Class A and Class B controlled drugs; and
- Controlled drugs specified by [Regulation 29\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)](#) of the Misuse of Drugs Regulations 1977 ("the Regulations").

- **Why use this triplicate controlled drugs prescription form (H572)?**

[Regulation 29\(1\)\(a\)](#) of the Regulations requires that these controlled drugs must be written in the authorised prescriber's handwriting on a form provided by the Director-General of Health.

Monitoring of all Class A & B controlled drug prescription information is carried out by the Ministry of Health. The third copy of the H572 and H572M prescription forms provides monitoring information. This information is also collected electronically.

- **Is monitoring the H572 copies of prescriptions the only way of following up potential drug misuse?**

Once potential misuse has been identified, the Medical Officer of Health (Medicines Control) may request prescription histories from pharmacies or request controlled drug information from prescribers who must respond within one month to the written request.

- **What other requirements relate to prescriptions for these controlled drugs?**

Requirements include:

- Prescriptions for Class B controlled drugs must be in the prescriber's own handwriting, except in the case of printed methadone prescriptions on quadruplicate H572M forms supplied by the Ministry of Health or Alcohol & Drug (A&D) clinic prescriptions where an approval to print onto triplicate H572 forms has been provided by the Director-General of Health.
- Details required on each prescription include the date, the name and address of the patient, name of the medication, the dose and frequency, the prescriber's name and address and signature.
- Prescriptions for children under 12 years require the age in years and months to be written on the prescription form.
- Prescriptions for controlled drugs must be dispensed within seven days of the prescribing date.
- Amendments to controlled drug prescriptions may only be made by the prescriber who must sign the changes.
- Some controlled drugs require additional approval for prescribing, in accordance with [Regulation 22](#) of the Regulations, for example methylphenidate and dexamphetamine.

- **What about other controlled drugs?**

Many other medicines are classified as controlled drugs. Frequently prescribed medication such as anorectics like Duromine®, pain relief medication (including codeine, and dihydrocodeine), benzodiazepines (including diazepam and clonazepam) and pseudoephedrine products are all controlled drugs.

- **Treatment of people dependent on controlled drugs**

[Section 24](#) of the Act prohibits prescribing to a person whom the prescriber believes to be dependent on that or any controlled drug, unless that prescriber:

- is a gazetted practitioner; or
- is working in a gazetted agency; or
- has an authority to prescribe for a particular patient.

- **What is the maximum period of supply for controlled drug prescriptions?**

In accordance with [Regulation 31](#) of the Regulations, the maximum period of supply is no greater than a quantity sufficient for use for a period of:

- one month for Class A & Class B controlled drugs;
- three months for Class C controlled drugs.

- **What and when should pharmacists check?**

Pharmacists are required to verify prescriptions where signatures of prescribers are unknown to them, as per [Regulation 33](#) of the Regulations. If a prescription for controlled drugs is suspected of being changed or not being genuine in some respect the prescription should be retained while the prescriber, the police and the Medical Officer of Health (Medicines Control) are contacted.

- **What are the requirements for phoned and faxed prescriptions?**

Phoned or faxed prescriptions for controlled drugs must have the hard copy supplied by the prescriber to the pharmacy within two working days, in accordance with [Regulation 34](#) of the Regulations.

Faxed prescriptions for controlled drugs must be faxes of the original signed prescription, not an unsigned temporary copy.

- **How long must controlled drug information be held after dispensing?**

Pharmacies are required to retain on the licensed premises the pharmacy copy of dispensed controlled drug prescriptions for 4 years, and Controlled Drugs Registers for 4 years after the date of last entry, as required by [Regulation 42](#) of the Regulations.

Contact details

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