

Frequently Asked Questions: Restriction Notices

- **What is a restriction notice?**

A restriction notice is a legal document issued by the Medical Officers of Health (Medicines Control). A restriction notice may be issued where the Medical Officers of Health are sufficiently satisfied that an individual has been obtaining a prescription medicine or controlled drug over a prolonged period, and is likely to seek further supplies.

The effect of a restriction notice is ultimately to protect the patient. A restriction notice prohibits every medical practitioner from prescribing or person from supplying controlled drugs, subject to exemptions relating to the prescribing or supply specified in the restriction notice.

A restriction notice can be issued for prescription medicines ([Section 49\(2\)](#), Medicines Act 1981) and/or controlled drugs ([Section 25\(3\)](#) of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1975).

- **How does the process begin?**

Doctors or services can contact Medicines Control to discuss a problem situation or they can send in a 'Request for a Restriction Notice' form with as much information as possible about the patient and the problem. Medicines Control's monitoring of prescriptions may result in the issuing of a restriction notice after contacting doctors or pharmacies for information.

- **How is a restriction notice prepared and actioned?**

All the information, including a prescription history, is collected and a restriction notice prepared for consideration by the Medical Officer of Health who may require further information, make recommendations or add conditions. The doctor or service (e.g. A&D clinic), the patient and/or the pharmacy are each sent a copy of the notice.

Many services request the patient's copies are sent to them initially so that they can explain and discuss the restriction notice with the patient.

Medical practitioners and pharmacists in a specific area may each be sent copies of a restriction notice, particularly in the case of 'doctor shopping' or where stockpiling of medication is a danger to the patient.

- **Where do I find information about restricted people and their restriction notices?**

Restriction notices are valid throughout New Zealand. Twice yearly Medicines Control send out booklets listing currently restricted persons and the doctors and services that may prescribe for them. More detailed information can be obtained from Medicines Control.

- **What other conditions relate to prescribing for restricted persons?**

The restriction notice may totally prohibit all prescribing **or** a combination of appropriate health services may be involved in the restrictions. For example a GP may prescribe benzodiazepines in conjunction with a gazetted clinic or Community Mental Health Team. Note that a restriction notice does not authorise a practitioner to prescribe for dependency.

- **What happens when a restricted person moves to a new area, doctor or pharmacy?**

The restriction notice remains valid until it is revoked or amended. The patient may attend a new doctor but only the prescriber nominated on the restriction notice may prescribe the medication described on the restriction notice until the restriction notice is amended.

- **How long do restriction notices remain in force?**

Restriction notices are reviewed regularly but do not have a finite end date. Services and doctors should advise Medicines Control when a patient leaves their care. GPs not included in the restriction notice cannot legally prescribe until notified of an amendment to the restriction notice.

- **How can a restriction notice be removed or revoked?**

Restriction notices may be revoked as part of the review process. Doctors or services may request revocation of a notice when they feel it is no longer appropriate for a particular patient. An application can be made to the Medical Officer of Health (Medicines Control) to have a restriction notice amended, varied or revoked.

If the Medical Officer of Health declines this application the person may apply in writing to the Minister of Health for review of the restriction notice, pursuant to [Section 49\(5\)](#) of the Medicines Act 1981 and/or [Section 25\(6\)](#) of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1975.

Contact details

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