

POISONS CONTROL INFORMATION SHEET

No. 301

INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS ON S8 MEDICATIONS

The *Poisons and Dangerous Drugs Act* is in place to safely monitor and control the supply of Schedule 8 substances.

On occasion, these matters may be referred by the Chief Health Officer to the Schedule 8 and Restricted Schedule 4 Clinical Advisory Committee or Health Practitioner Boards.

NON-RESTRICTED S8 MEDICATIONS

These medications include:

- codeine
- flunitrazepam
- ketamine
- methadone tablets
- pentazocine
- pethidine
- buprenorphine (except Subutex and Suboxone)
- fentanyl
- hydromorphone
- morphine (including aspirin with morphine tablets)
- oxycodone

Some other S8 medications may be prescribed by specialists or in hospitals.

Your doctor can only prescribe these medications for a limited number of patients. This is to ensure that patients with pain problems receive effective treatment, including referrals to other services that may be helpful in rehabilitation of pain. Patients with problems other than chronic or acute pain may be assessed and referred for appropriate treatment.

Your doctor also has to notify Poisons Control of each patient that she/he prescribes S8 medications for if the treatment lasts longer than a few weeks or if high doses are prescribed.

Your pharmacist can dispense S8 medications to you in accordance with the doctor's prescription.

Prescriptions are valid for **TWO** months, but only one month's worth of medication can be dispensed to you at any one time. This is the case for both PBS and private prescriptions. No repeats are allowed on a private prescription.

The interval between supplies must be written on each prescription

You should only see one doctor for S8 medication and it is recommended that you have your medication dispensed by one pharmacy if possible. If you have issues with dependence your doctor can refer you to a specialist agency that will discuss alternative treatments with you.

RESTRICTED S8 PSYCHOSTIMULANT MEDICATIONS

This group of medications includes prescriptions for narcolepsy and attention deficit disorder that contain dexamphetamine and methylphenidate (Ritalin, Attenta and Concerta etc.)

Your doctor needs to be a specialist paediatrician (for children up to 18 years of age) or a psychiatrist, neurologist, physician or a doctor in training in these specialist fields.

Doctors can co-prescribe with one of the above specialists with a compulsory yearly review. Your doctor can only prescribe these medications to a limited number of patients and has to obtain a special authority to prescribe for each patient.

Your pharmacist can dispense psychostimulant medications to you according to your doctor's prescription.

Psychostimulant prescriptions are now valid for **SIX** months since 30 April 2008, but only one month's worth of medication can be dispensed at any one time (special arrangements are in place for patients who need dexamphetamine compounded into a sustained release form).

The interval between supplies must be written on each prescription.

If you receive stimulant medication from a general practitioner and your specialist is based interstate, you will need to get a referral to a specialist in the NT within the next six months or when an appointment becomes available. Your doctor will arrange the referral for you.

RESTRICTED S8 MEDICATIONS BUPRENORPHINE AND METHADONE

This group of medications includes methadone liquid, Subutex and Suboxone sublingual tablets prescribed for treatment of opioid dependence.

Your doctor can only prescribe these medications to a limited number of patients and has to obtain a special authority to prescribe for each patient.

A contract agreement between the patient and the doctor has to be signed to specify the medication, dosage and the dispensing pharmacy. The contract also contains a code of behaviour that a patient has to adhere to during the program.

Takeaway doses are only allowed by prior arrangement with your doctor. Takeaway doses may be allowed for patients who are stable on a program and have reduced or stopped using illicit drugs. The maximum takeaway allowance is three per week for persons on daily dosing, and one per week for alternate daily dosing.

Your pharmacist will dispense the medication to you on a daily basis or as specified by your doctor.

Your pharmacist is only allowed to dose patients who have valid prescriptions. Dispensing of a prescription for buprenorphine, buprenorphine/naloxone and methadone must commence **within three days** from the prescribing or starting date that is written on the prescription.

You will need to attend your doctor's appointments regularly so as not to be left without a prescription as your pharmacist is not allowed to dose without a valid prescription

Your pharmacist is not allowed to dose a patient who is intoxicated on alcohol or other drugs

Misuse and diversion of buprenorphine, buprenorphine/naloxone and methadone will result in termination from the program.

**For more information on legislation and how it may affect you
contact Poisons Control on 8922 7341**

**For 24-hour information on alcohol & other drug issues, referral advice or
counselling
contact Alcohol and Drug Information Service (ADIS) NT on 1800 131 350**