

PBS-subsidised opioids – steps to prescribing



Consider your patient's ongoing pain management needs

- The NPS [MedicineWise News article](#) presents the latest evidence on the limited role of opioids in chronic non-cancer pain. Non-pharmacological therapies and active (rather than passive) self-management is the preferred approach to improving function and quality of life for people living with chronic non-cancer pain.
- Painaustralia has teamed with NPS Medicinewise and the NSW Agency for Clinical Innovation to develop a [GP-mediated resource](#) to support initiating the conversation between health professionals and consumers about the benefits of reducing or stopping their opioid treatment. This also provides assistance with agreeing on an action planned approach.
- The changes to the PBS opioid listings ensure appropriate and safe access to opioid medication is maintained, particularly for palliative care patients, while also addressing factors that promote misuse and abuse of opioids.



Determine your patient's eligibility for PBS-subsidised therapy

- NPS MedicineWise has published a [RADAR article](#) summarising the June 2020 PBS changes. Individual restriction criteria can be reviewed on the [PBS website](#).
- Consider prescribing the new smaller listed quantities if your patient will require treatment for only 2-3 days.
- Consider a secondary review with another prescriber if your patient has been taking opioids for more than 12 months. Under some circumstances a secondary review with an alternate prescriber is mandatory to request authority approval for increased quantities and/or repeats.
- The [National Pain Services Directory](#) lists over 200 pain specialist services across Australia

Determine whether increased quantities or repeats are required



- If your patient requires long-term therapy with PBS-subsidised opioids, you may request authority approval from Services Australia for increased quantities and/or repeats.
- A secondary review of the patient's pain management must be undertaken by a second doctor if they have been receiving or are expected to receive treatment with opioids for more than 12 months. Reviews may be conducted by phone or telehealth consultation.
- The PBS restrictions for opioids will be updated later this year in order to will allow the secondary annual review for palliative care patients to be undertaken by a palliative care nurse practitioner.
- Further, these changes will exempt palliative care patients from a secondary review if their clinical condition is such that it is not possible to conduct this review.
- It is not mandatory to consult a pain specialist. Any doctor registered in Australia may conduct this pain management review.



Request authority approval from Services Australia

- You can request real-time authority approval through the [Online PBS Authorities system \(OPA\)](#) for quantities and/or repeats that provide up to 3 months' treatment.
- Alternatively, you can request up to 1 months' treatment via the telephone and up to 3 months' treatment in writing (via mail or Health Professional Online Services (HPOS) form upload).
- When requesting authority approval, you will be required to provide additional information to demonstrate the patient meets the PBS restriction criteria. To assist in streamlining this process, it is important to familiarise yourself with the relevant PBS restriction.
- The PBS updates will remove the need to provide the date of the review and name of the medical practitioner consulted for authority applications. However, prescribers need to ensure they keep this information for auditing purposes.