



ACTIVE INGREDIENT PRESCRIBING – PHARMACIST FAQs

What is active ingredient prescribing?

Active ingredient prescribing requires approved prescribers to include active ingredient names on Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) and Repatriation PBS (RPBS) prescriptions. This will help consumers understand the medicines they are taking.

What does this mean for me?

Current pharmacy workflows or processes won't change. Pharmacists should continue talking with consumers about generic medicines, where possible.

Does this affect all PBS and RPBS prescriptions?

No. Handwritten prescriptions, paper based medication charts in residential aged care, and certain medicines are exempt from this requirement.

What are the benefits?

Active ingredient prescribing is expected to provide a number of benefits, including:

- Supporting prescriber communities and patients to better understand the active ingredients in their medicines;
- Reducing patient safety concerns relating to patients taking multiple doses of medicines due to confusion;
- Assisting conversations between pharmacists and patients concerning generic alternatives;
- Decreasing out-of-pocket expenses for patients by promoting the uptake of generic and biosimilar medicines;
- Improving the financial sustainability of the PBS, and encouraging more sustainable prescribing practices; and
- Aligning Australian prescribing practices with international standards.

When does it start?

Vendors are updating prescribing software to automatically include active ingredients on prescriptions. From 1 February 2021, all PBS and RPBS prescriptions must meet the new requirements for active ingredient prescribing.

Are any medicines excluded?

Yes. The Department of Health is working with the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care to identify medicines and medicinal items which can not be prescribed by active ingredient for safety or practicality reasons. These items will be identified in the List of Excluded Medicinal Items, legislated and published by the Department of Health.

Can doctors still prescribe specific brands?

Yes. Doctors can include a brand name on a prescription if necessary for the clinical treatment of the patient, add brand if required for PBS Authority and disallow brand substitution if a specific brand of medicine is required. Active ingredients always appear first on prescriptions.

How can I help consumers?

Pharmacists will play an important role in explaining to consumers why their prescriptions have changed. Pharmacists should continue to provide consumers with information about their brand options, and what their medicines will do for them.

WHO SHOULD I CONTACT FOR MORE INFORMATION?

You should address any queries via email to aiprescribing@health.gov.au