

Working with medicines

# Nurses and midwives

## Regulations

Nurses and midwives, registered with the national board, have various authorities under the Medicines and Poisons Regulations 2016 to purchase, hold and use prescription medicines.

## Authority

The following table outlines the authority of nurses and midwives to use medicines under the Regulations:

| **Practitioner** | **Type of Authority** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Obtain (purchase)** | **Possess** | **Administer** | **Supply** | **Prescribe** |
| Nurse Practitioner | 🗸 | 🗸 | 🗸 | 🗸 | 🗸 |
| Registered Nurse |  | 🗸 | 🗸 1 2 | 🗸 2 |  |
| Enrolled Nurse |  | 🗸 | 🗸 1 2 | 🗸 2 |  |
| Endorsed Midwife | 🗸 | 🗸 | 🗸 3 | 🗸 3 | 🗸 3 |
| Midwife |  | 🗸 | 🗸 1 2 | 🗸 2 |  |

Notes:

1. under direction of an authorised prescriber.
2. in accordance with a Structured Administration and Supply Arrangement.
3. in accordance with the prescribing formulary published by the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia.

Any authority is limited to the lawful practice of the professional and includes:

* scope of practice / general professional limitations;
* for patients under the care of the health practitioner;
* usual place of business;
* course of operating the practitioners business / as part of employment; and
* any relevant restrictions or conditions imposed on the individual practitioner.

Scope of practice for nurse practitioners, endorsed midwives, nurses and midwives is as defined by the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia.

## Purchasing medicines

Nurse practitioners and endorsed midwives may purchase medicines in their own name, to treat patients under their care. Medicines must otherwise be purchased by an authorised health practitioner (e.g. medical practitioner) or Permit holder (e.g. hospital), but may be held on their behalf by a nurse or midwife, in accordance with the Regulations.

## Supply and prescription

Nurse practitioners and endorsed midwives may personally prescribe or supply a Schedule 4 (S4) medicine in accordance with their authority. Any medicine supplied must be appropriately packaged and fully labelled according to regulation.

A nurse practitioner or endorsed midwife may administer S8 medicines, in accordance with their authority. A nurse practitioner may prescribe S8 medicines, in accordance with the *Schedule 8 Medicines Prescribing Code*, including obtaining prior written authorisation from the Department of Health. Prescribers should be aware of obligations in relation to drug dependent and oversupplied persons.

## Storage

Schedule 4 medicines must be stored in a locked storage facility to prevent unauthorised access. For example: a lockable room, cupboard, cabinet or refrigerator. Precautions must be taken to ensure keys are not accessible to unauthorised staff.

Schedule 8 medicines must be stored in a locked purpose-built drug safe. Storage of a total of S8 medicines less than of 250 doses requires a small safe and greater than 500 doses requires a large safe. Motion detectors are required when more than 250 doses are stored. On most hospital wards, a locked hardwood or metal cabinet can be used instead of a safe.

## Recording

Nurses and midwives must make accurate clinical records of all medicines administered, or supplied (where permitted), and retain these for at least 2 years for S4 medicines, or 5 years for S8 medicines. All records must be available to be produced on demand of an authorised officer of the Department of Health. In a hospital, use of the medication chart may substitute for the clinical record, when in accordance with the Regulations.

A register of transactions, kept in an approved manner and form, must be maintained for all incoming and outgoing S8 medicines. A monthly inventory must be also performed, however in hospitals, more regular checks of stock balances 8such as daily), are necessary.

## Compliance assessment

Nurses and midwives possessing or using medicines may be required to participate in routine audit assessments to monitor compliance with these requirements. Non-compliance with the Regulations may result restrictions or loss of medicines authorities, notification to the Nursing and Midwifery Board, and/or prosecution under the legislation.

## More information

For more information contact the Medicines and Poisons Regulation Branch on:

* (08) 9222 6883 (Monday – Friday, 8.30am – 4.30pm)
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