

Working with medicines

# Paramedics

## Regulations

Paramedics, employed by a Health Service Permit holder to provide ambulance or paramedic services, have various authorities under the Medicines and Poisons Regulations 2016 to hold and use prescription medicines.

## Authority

The following table outlines the authority of paramedics to use medicines under the Regulations:

| **Practitioner** | **Type of Authority** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Obtain (purchase)** | **Possess** | **Administer** | **Supply** | **Prescribe** |
| Paramedic |  | 🗸 | 🗸 1 2 | 🗸 2 |  |

Notes:

1. under direction of an authorised prescriber.
2. in accordance with a Structured Administration and Supply Arrangement.

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

* within scope of employment with the Health Service Permit holder;
* for patients under the care of the Health Service Permit holder; and
* any relevant restrictions or conditions imposed on the individual practitioner.

## Purchasing medicines

Medicines must be purchased by a Health Service Permit holder (e.g. St John Ambulance), but may be held on their behalf by a paramedic, in accordance with the Regulations.

## Administration

Paramedics may administer a Schedule 4 (S4) or Schedule 8 (S8) medicine in accordance with their authority, when directed by a medical practitioner.

A paramedic may administer a S4 or S8 medicine in accordance with a Structured Administration and Supply Arrangement issued by the Health Service Permit Holder.

## Storage

S4 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.

S8 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 covering the safe are required when more than 250 doses are stored.

In an ambulance, S8 medicines must remain in the possession of the authorised practitioner at all times and all reasonable steps must be taken to prevent their loss or theft. The quantity held must be the minimum required for the normal operation of the ambulance to treat patients.

## Recording

Paramedics must make accurate clinical records of all medicines administered 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 if demanded by an authorised officer of the Department of Health.

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.

## Compliance assessment

Paramedics may be required to participate in routine audit assessments to monitor compliance with these requirements. Non-compliance with the Regulations may result in regulatory actions such as restrictions or loss of medicines authorities 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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