

Pain & Stimulant Medication Management FAQs

I am in pain/distress and need medication. Where can I go?

If you are in acute pain or distress, please present to your nearest ED.

If this is chronic pain or non-emergency pain, you can go to your GP as a first option. Your GP is the 'gatekeeper' for your healthcare options, and they can also prescribe some small amounts of medication as needed.

If you require a prescription for a Schedule 8 medicine (strong pain medicine, stimulant or medicinal cannabis) your doctor is required to make an application to the Department of Health before prescribing for you.

For ongoing pain and/or symptom management, you will need a diagnosis that warrants ongoing pain medication. You should ask your GP for a referral to a pain specialist who will be able to prescribe medications with your GP and may have other treatments for you to try.

The Department of Health has produced a prescribing code for Schedule 8 medicines. This means doctors or other health professionals prescribing Schedule 8 medicines will need to refer a patient to an appropriate specialist when a patient's treatment with schedule 8 medications meets any of the high-risk criteria.

My GP won't prescribe me my medication. What do I do?

It depends on why your GP can't or won't prescribe you medication. If the GP is not your usual one, and/or it is your first or second time seeing them, they are unlikely to prescribe schedule 8 medication without confirmation of a diagnosis and treatment plan.

Sometimes GPs have constraints on what they can prescribe, or how much they can prescribe.

Sometimes your GP may feel that there is potential misuse of the medication, and/or risk of addiction, so they will refuse to prescribe more.

Sometimes your GP will have been advised by another health professional involved in your care that you don't need the medication anymore.

Sometimes, if suspected misuse has occurred, a health professional involved in your care might register your name with the Medicines and Poisons Regulation Branch on the Drugs of Dependence list. More information on that list can be found here:

https://www.healthywa.wa.gov.au/Articles/A_E/Drugs-of-dependence

Why can't my doctor prescribe medication for me?

Doctors have to follow the rules on prescribing. Sometimes they have to submit an application to the Department of Health to prescribe, and receive an authorisation, before they can commence or continue prescribing.

The Department of Health may also require additional information from doctors prescribing Schedule 8 medicines before they give an authorisation.

This information can include:

Consultant reports
Urine drug screens
Reports from drug treatment providers

The doctor can phone the Department of Health to discuss the progress of any application. This may include finding out if any additional information is required before the application can be processed.

Who should I talk to if I am struggling with overusing my medication?

Talk to your doctor or contact the Alcohol and Drug Support Line on 9442 5000 or toll free on 1800 198 024.

I have been registered with the Drugs of Dependence list. What can I do?

Your details will be automatically removed from the record provided there has been no direct or indirect contact with the Department of Health relating to your use of a drug of addiction **for at least 5 years since the initial report.**

'Contact' includes having been prescribed S8 medicines, CPOP dosing and other enquiries relating to access to drugs of dependence.

Your doctor can apply, on your behalf, to have your name removed from the record, provided you have neither used any illicit drugs nor misused any prescribed S8 medicines for at least two years. You will be required to have certain medical tests as part of this process. **The doctor must have been treating you for at least two years.** Your doctor can call the Prescriber Information Service at the Department for guidance about this process.

You can apply to have the record about yourself amended or removed. You will need to provide evidence to support your request. If the reason you want the record about you removed is because you have been drug free for at least two years, it is recommended you ask your doctor to apply on your behalf (see above). Your request needs to be made in writing and mailed to:

The Chief Executive Officer
Medicines and Poisons Regulation Branch
Department of Health
PO Box 8172
Perth Business Centre WA 6849

Your request must be accompanied by certified copies of documents supporting your identity, which include photographic identification and your address. It must be posted, and scans or photocopies of certified documents will not be accepted.

Being on the list does not stop a health professional administering Schedule 8 medicines to you in an emergency (such as in hospital).

Further information can be found here:

https://ww2.health.wa.gov.au/Articles/N_R/Reporting-drug-dependence

You can also contact the MPRB here if you have further questions:

Medicines and Poisons Regulation Branch

Mailing address: PO Box 8172, Perth Business Centre, WA 6849

Phone: 9222 6883

Email: MPRB@health.wa.gov.au

I am on the waitlist for a specialist, but I am in pain/distress now.
What do I do?

You can ask your GP to provide you with management treatment in the meantime. Unfortunately, if your GP is unable to prescribe you with any medication while you are on the waitlist to see a specialist, your only option is to present to ED for acute management.

You can always call up the specialist and ask to be put on their cancellation list to see if you can get in sooner, or you can ask your GP to send a follow up letter advising that your condition is worsening and that you require an appointment as soon as possible.

Can I change GPs if my doctor isn't prescribing me what I need?

You can, you have the right to seek treatment wherever you like, and you have the right to a second opinion. However, if a doctor sees you for the first time and your first request is schedule 8 medication, they may flag this as 'drug seeking behaviour'.

It is important to weigh up the pros and cons of switching healthcare providers, and it is encouraged that you do some research on who you would like to treat you beforehand.

Finding doctors who specialise in chronic conditions or pain is going to help, and you can always call up a practice and ask for an appointment with the best doctor for management of your condition/s.