



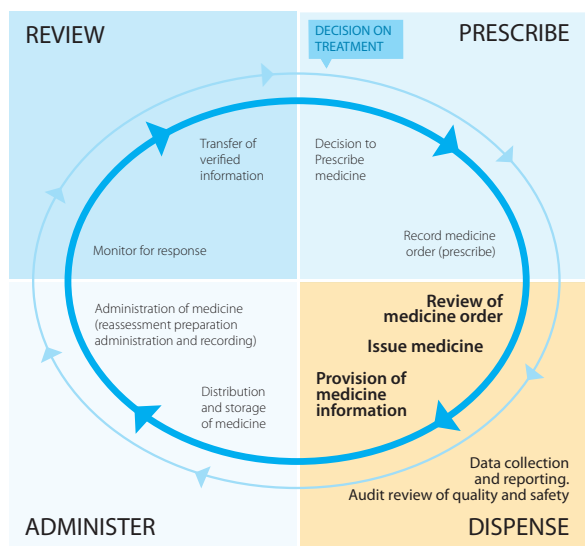
Dispensing your prescription medicine: more than sticking a label on a bottle

Pharmacy is the health profession responsible for ensuring the safe and effective use of medicines.

In recent times, the scope of pharmacy practice has extended beyond the supply of medicines to include a growing range of professional health services including medicine reviews, chronic disease management and wound management support. Many pharmacies also provide preventive health services including smoking cessation and weight management support. However, the traditional dispensing of prescribed medicines still remains the important priority for most pharmacists.

Dispensing is an integral service provided by pharmacists as part of the Medication Management Cycle. The separation of prescribing and dispensing of medicines provides a safety mechanism as it ensures independent review of a prescription occurs prior to the commencement of treatment.

Medication Management Cycle



In addition to the labelling and supply of a medicine according to legal requirements, dispensing involves the clinical interpretation and evaluation of the prescription.

This includes assessing the prescribed dosage to ensure it is safe and appropriate; checking for allergies, contra-indications and drug interactions, at the point of medicine selection or preparation.

The provision of medicine information to the consumer or their carer, to ensure the safe and effective use of the product, completes the dispensing process.

Pharmacists must dispense accurately, reflect the prescriber's intentions and be consistent with the needs and safety of the consumer.

As a complete process, dispensing requires the professional and clinical review by a pharmacist. Some steps in the dispensing process can be completed by appropriately trained pharmacy assistants under direct pharmacist supervision.

Counselling is an essential element of the dispensing process, ensuring patients or their carers have sufficient information to enable an understanding of their medicines and the intended therapeutic effect, and to minimise the risk of adverse effects.

As a result of dispensing, patients or their carers should:

- receive clearly and correctly labelled medicines
- understand how and when to use the prescribed medicines
- understand how to store the medicines
- have access to a pharmacist for professional counselling or advice

The flow-chart on the following page demonstrates that there is more to the dispensing process than sticking a label on a bottle. ■

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Medicine dispensing process



Prescription in

Accept and check

ACCEPT AND CHECK PRESCRIPTION DETAILS

- Prescriber details
- Patient details
- Medicare/Concessional/Close the Gap eligibility details
- Confirm items to be dispensed
- Preference for generic medicine

Review and process

SCRIPT VALIDITY

- meets legal requirements
- Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme eligibility

SAFETY AND APPROPRIATENESS

- safe dosage
- contra-indications (not appropriate with certain medical conditions)
- appropriateness of prescription for age, weight etc

REVIEW PATIENT'S DISPENSING HISTORY

- new or changed therapy
- duplication
- interactions (drug-drug, drug-disease state, drug-herb)
- compliance issues (is medicine being taken as prescribed?)
- unusual use
- misuse/abuse issues (can be intentional or unintentional)

PATIENT-SPECIFIC FACTORS

- age
- allergies
- other health conditions
- pregnancy/lactation

Select/prepare and check

SELECT PRODUCT

- appropriate drug, brand, strength, form, quantity
- repack if needed (non-standard quantity)
- prepare where needed (reconstitute or compound from raw ingredients)

DISPENSING CHECK

- correct drug, brand, strength, form, quantity
- correct formula/methodology for compounded products
- confirm Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme processing

Label and assemble

LABEL AND ASSEMBLE DISPENSED PRODUCTS

- review expiry, instructions, cautionary labels
- conduct barcode scan check
- complete documentation and records
- organise counselling aids (eg written materials)

Supply and counsel

SUPPLY PRESCRIPTION TO PATIENT/CARER: RE-CHECK

- correct patient?
- correct medicines?
- documentation present?
- unusual storage/discard requirements?
- patient/carer understands directions/advisories?
- clarify patient/carer issues
- obtain patient/carer signature for supply

COUNSEL PATIENT/CARER ON SAFE AND APPROPRIATE USE

This information has been developed with reference to the *Professional Practice Standards Version 4, 2010*, the *Australian Pharmaceutical Formulary and Handbook, Twenty-Third Edition 2015 (APF23)*, the *Guide to good dispensing* by Pharmaceutical Defence Limited and the Pharmacy Board of Australia's *Guidelines for dispensing of medicines*.



Medicines out