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| Features of a Victorian pharmacotherapy prescription |
| New requirements from 1 July 2023 |
| OFFICIAL |

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# Background

The Commonwealth Government have announced that the way in which opioid dependence treatment (ODT) medicines are currently listed on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) is changing from 1 July 2023.

This affects the way you prescribe ODT medicines currently listed on the PBS, which include:

* methadone oral liquid
* buprenorphine sublingual tablets
* buprenorphine + naloxone sublingual films
* long-acting injectable buprenorphine products

This document has been prepared to support Victorian prescribers by clarifying the mandatory requirements for legal prescribing of ODT medicines from 1 July. Starting now (pre-1 July 2023), if you have a review or appointment with a patient, prescribers are encouraged to write prescriptions that meet these new requirements. This will support patients to transition from current ODT arrangements to the PBS arrangements from 1 July 2023.

For more detailed information on PBS changes including additional factsheets, please visit the [Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care’s website](https://www.pbs.gov.au/browse/section100-md).

## Prescribing requirements from 1 July 2023

As with any other Schedule 8 poison, ODT medicines may not be administered or supplied without a valid prescription, which must comply with the requirements set out in the Victorian *Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Regulations 2017.*

From 1 July 2023, like other PBS medicines, new prescriptions that are written by eligible prescribers (i.e., PBS eligible medical practitioners and nurse practitioners) for ODT medicines will also need to meet PBS requirements to be dispensed. These new PBS requirements include:

**Maximum quantities and repeats -** Prescriptions for ODT medicines will be written for a maximum quantity equivalent to 28 days of the maximum dose per day in line with national guidelines[[1]](#footnote-1) (also at **Appendix 1**). Up to 2 repeats will be able to be prescribed for ODT medicines (that is, 3 months / 84 days total supply when including the original).

Buprenorphine-containing medicines are prescribed and dispensed on a per-pack basis. This means if different strengths are prescribed and supplied, each strength will require a separate prescription, in line with other medicines on the PBS.

**PBS Approval numbers and authority codes -** Each prescription will need to have a PBS Authority Prescription Number and the relevant Authority Approval code i.e., the Streamline code for up to the maximum quantity. Prescriptions for approved authorities for increased quantities of oral and sublingual ODT medicines will have an Authority Approval Number[[2]](#footnote-2).

**Patient Medicare details -** Medicare details and any concession or entitlement card details will need to be captured to enable ODT medicines to be dispensed.

Please see **Appendix 2** for complete details of Victorian and PBS requirements when writing a pharmacotherapy prescription.

Examples of prescriptions for different ODT medicines and dosing regimens are included at **Appendix 3.**

**Prescribing and administering long-acting injectable buprenorphine in clinics including GP practices and medical centres**

The Commonwealth Department of Health and Aging have confirmed that transitional arrangements will allow clinics to continue to order long-acting injectable buprenorphine (LAIB) and other ODT medicines directly to their clinic as per current arrangements **up until 30 November 2023**.

From 1 December 2023, ODT medicines including LAIB will need to be ordered and dispensed through a community or hospital pharmacy (please visit the [Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care’s website](https://www.pbs.gov.au/browse/section100-md) for more information).

Clinics will continue to offer treatment including with LAIB by obtaining supplies dispensed by PBS approved pharmacies. All existing clinics will continue to be able to treat and provide clinical services to patients, including services rebated under the Medicare Benefits Schedule.

# Appendix 1: Maximum quantities of ODT medicines

| **Pharmaceutical Benefit** | **Brands available** | **Maximum Quantity** | **Packs** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Methadone hydrochloride 5 mg/mL oral liquid 1L | Aspen Methadone Syrup ®  Biodone ® | 840 mL | 0.84 bottles |
| Methadone hydrochloride 5 mg/mL oral liquid 200 mL | Aspen Methadone Syrup ®  Biodone Forte ® | 840 mL | 4.2 bottles |
| Buprenorphine 2 mg + naloxone 500 microgram sublingual film | Suboxone ® | 84 | 3 packs |
| Buprenorphine 8 mg + naloxone 2 mg sublingual film | Suboxone ® | 112 | 4 packs |
| Buprenorphine 0.4 mg sublingual tablet | Subutex ® | 28 | 4 packs |
| Buprenorphine 2 mg sublingual tablet | Subutex ® | 84 | 12 packs |
| Buprenorphine 8 mg sublingual tablet | Subutex ® | 112 | 16 packs |
| Buprenorphine modified release injection, 8 mg, 24 mg, or 32 mg syringe | Buvidal Weekly ® | 4 | 1 injection per pack x4 |
| Buprenorphine modified release injection, 16 mg 64 mg, 96 mg 128 mg, or 160 mg syringe | Buvidal Monthly ® | 1 | 1 injection per pack |
| Buprenorphine modified release injection, 100 mg or 300 mg syringe | Sublocade ® | 1 | 1 injection per pack |

# Appendix 2: Features of a Victorian pharmacotherapy prescription

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| --- | --- |
| Dr William Pacemaker  123 Medical Street  Ash Park VIC 3999  Tel: (03) 1234 5678  Prescriber No: 1234 567 | < Prescriber’s name, address, contact details, Prescriber Number |
| Mr Barry Patient  DOB: 06/07/1980  88 Luck Street  Forktown VIC 3131  Medicare No: 1234 56789 1 | < Patient’s name, residential address, date of birth, Medicare details and any concession or entitlement card details |
| 01/07/2015 | < Date prescription written |
| Streamline Authority Code (Methadone oral liquid) 14178\* | < PBS Authority Numbers and codes  Each prescription will need to have a PBS Authority Prescription Number (pre-prepared on an authority prescription pad or generated through prescribing software for printed prescriptions or electronic prescriptions).  Each script must also include the relevant Authority Approval code i.e., the Streamlined code for up to the maximum quantity.  Prescriptions for approved authorities for increased quantities of oral and sublingual ODT medicines will have an Authority Approval Number. |
| Rx Methadone Liquid  5mg/mL | < Details of the pharmaceutical benefit i.e., name of drug, form, strength  Prescription written is legible and durable |
| 100 (one hundred) mg / 20 (twenty) mL daily | < Daily dose in words and figures  If the patient is on a variable dose or dose range, this information should be captured in the daily dose e.g.  90-100 (ninety – one hundred) mg / 18-20 (eighteen – twenty) mL daily |
| Maximum quantity 560 (five hundred and sixty) mL | <Maximum quantity written in words and figures.  Maximum quantities for ODT medicines are equivalent to 28 days of the maximum dose per day in line with national guidelines.  If the patient is dosed within a range each day, the quantity on the prescription should be calculated according to the maximum dose in the range per day (multiplied by up to 28 days) |
| One (1) repeat | < Up to a maximum of two (2), written in words and figures. If the prescription is to be supplied only once a statement needs to be included, using words and figures, that there is to be no repeat supply e.g. zero (0) repeats. |
| Take-away doses for Saturdays and Sundays | < Take away doses (if authorised) |
| Other directions | < Additional dosing directions for the dispensing pharmacy e.g. Split dosing instructions, variable dosing regimen. |
| Rx Methadone Liquid 5mg/mL  100 (one hundred) mg daily  Maximum quantity 560 (five hundred and sixty) mL  Mitte 1 (one) repeat  Take-away doses for Saturdays and Sundays | < For computer-generated prescription, particulars of the prescription also handwritten |
| To be dispensed at: Mortarpestles Pharmacy  125 Fourth Street, Splotswood | < Pharmacy at which the pharmacotherapy is to be supplied |
| William Pacemaker | < Signature |

# Appendix 3: Example prescriptions

**Example 1**

Prescription for a daily dose of Suboxone 40 mg (5 films of Suboxone 8 mg) daily, with six take away doses authorised per week. The maximum quantity to be dispensed over 28-days is 140 films, which exceeds the national guidelines limit of 112 films. This means that the prescriber will need to request approval for increased quantities through Services Australia, and then use the provided PBS Authority Approval Number.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Dr William Pacemaker  123 Medical Street  Ash Park VIC 3999  Tel: (03) 1234 5678  Prescriber No: 1234 567 | Mr Barry Patient  DOB: 06/07/1980  88 Luck Street  Forktown VIC 3131  Medicare No: 1234 56789 1 |
| Date: 01/07/2015 | |
| PBS Authority Approval Number P2023OD\* | |
| Rx Suboxone (Buprenorphine / naloxone) 8/2 mg sublingual film | |
| 40 (forty) mg/ 5 (five) films daily | |
| Maximum quantity: 1120 (one thousand one hundred and twenty) mg, 140 (one hundred and forty) strips | |
| One (1) repeat | |
| Six take away doses per week | |
| Rx Suboxone 8/2 mg sublingual film  40(forty) mg / 5(five) films daily  Maximum quantity: 1120 (one thousand one hundred and twenty) mg, 140 (one hundred and forty) strips  Mitte 1 (one) repeat  6 take-away doses per week | |
| To be dispensed at: Mortarpestles Pharmacy  125 Fourth Street, Splotswood | |
| Signed: William Pacemaker | |

\*Example code only.

**Example 2**

Prescription for a daily dose of Suboxone 24 mg (3 films of Suboxone 8 mg), with six take away doses authorised per week. The maximum quantity to be dispensed over 28 days is 84 films, which is within the maximum limit of 112 films. This means that a streamline authority code can be used.

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| --- | --- |
| Dr William Pacemaker  123 Medical Street  Ash Park VIC 3999  Tel: (03) 1234 5678  Prescriber No: 1234 567 | Mr Barry Patient  DOB: 06/07/1980  88 Luck Street  Forktown VIC 3131  Medicare No: 1234 56789 1 |
| Date: 01/07/2015 | |
| Streamline Authority Code 14074\* | |
| Rx Suboxone (Buprenorphine / naloxone) 8/2 mg sublingual film | |
| 24 (twenty-four) mg/ 3 (three) films daily | |
| Maximum quantity: 672 (six hundred and seventy-two) mg, 84 (seventy-two) strips | |
| One (1) repeat | |
| Six take away doses per week | |
| Rx Suboxone 8/2 mg sublingual film  24(twenty-four) mg / 3(three) films daily  Maximum quantity: 672 (six hundred and seventy-two) mg , 72 (seventy-two) strips  Mitte 1 (one) repeat  6 take-away doses per week | |
| To be dispensed at: Mortarpestles Pharmacy  125 Fourth Street, Splotswood | |
| William Pacemaker | |

\*Example code only.

**Example 3**

Prescription for Methadone 200 mg (40 mL), with take-away doses authorised for four times per week. The maximum quantity to be dispensed over 28 days is 1120 mL, which exceeds the national guidelines limit of 840mL. This means that the prescriber will need to request approval for increased quantities through Services Australia, and then use the provided PBS Authority Approval Number. Note that in the case that no repeats are authorised, this still needs to be written in words and figures.

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| Dr William Pacemaker  123 Medical Street  Ash Park VIC 3999  Tel: (03) 1234 5678  Prescriber No: 1234 567 | Mr Barry Patient  DOB: 06/07/1980  88 Luck Street  Forktown VIC 3131  Medicare No: 1234 56789 1 |
| Date: 01/07/2015 | |
| Streamline Authority Code (Methadone oral liquid) P2023OD\* | |
| Rx Methadone Liquid  5mg/mL | |
| 200 (two hundred) mg / 40 (forty) mL daily | |
| Maximum quantity: 1120 (one thousand one hundred and twenty) mL | |
| Zero (0) repeat | |
| Take-away doses four times per week. | |
| Rx Methadone Liquid 5mg/mL  200(two hundred) mg daily  Maximum quantity: 1120(one thousand two hundred and twenty) mL  Mitte 1 (one) repeat  Take-away doses for Saturdays and Sundays | |
| To be dispensed at: Mortarpestles Pharmacy  125 Fourth Street, Splotswood | |
| William Pacemaker | |

\*Example code only.

**Example 4**

Prescription for a daily dose of Suboxone 14 mg (1 film of Suboxone 8 mg, 3 film of Suboxone 2 mg), with six take away doses authorised per week. Buprenorphine-containing medicines are prescribed and dispensed on a per-pack basis, like the prescribing of other PBS medicines. This means if different strengths are prescribed and supplied, each strength will require a separate prescription.

The maximum quantity to be dispensed over 28 days is 28 films of Suboxone 8mg and 84 films of Suboxone 2mg, which is within the maximum limits. This means that a streamline authority code can be used.

*Prescription #1 – Suboxone 8mg*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Dr William Pacemaker  123 Medical Street  Ash Park VIC 3999  Tel: (03) 1234 5678  Prescriber No: 1234 567 | Mr Barry Patient  DOB: 06/07/1980  88 Luck Street  Forktown VIC 3131  Medicare No: 1234 56789 1 |
| Date: 01/07/2015 | |
| Streamline Authority Code 14074\* | |
| Rx Suboxone (Buprenorphine / naloxone) 8/2 mg sublingual film | |
| 8 (eight) mg/ 1 (one) film daily | |
| Maximum quantity: 224 (two hundred and twenty-four) mg, 28 (twenty-eight) strips | |
| One (1) repeat | |
| Six take away doses per week | |
| Additional instructions: Total daily dose is 14mg daily, taken with 3 films of Suboxone 2mg | |
| Rx Suboxone 8/2 mg sublingual film  8 (eight) mg/ 1 (one) film daily  Maximum quantity: 224 (two hundred and twenty-four) mg, 28 (twenty-eight) strips  Mitte 1 (one) repeat  6 take-away doses per week | |
| To be dispensed at: Mortarpestles Pharmacy  125 Fourth Street, Splotswood | |
| William Pacemaker | |

\*Example code only.

*Prescription #2 – Suboxone 2mg*

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| --- | --- |
| Dr William Pacemaker  123 Medical Street  Ash Park VIC 3999  Tel: (03) 1234 5678  Prescriber No: 1234 567 | Mr Barry Patient  DOB: 06/07/1980  88 Luck Street  Forktown VIC 3131  Medicare No: 1234 56789 1 |
| Date: 01/07/2015 | |
| Streamline Authority Code 14074\* | |
| Rx Suboxone (Buprenorphine / naloxone) 2mg/500 microgram sublingual film | |
| 2 (two) mg/ 3 (three) film daily | |
| Maximum quantity: 168 (one hundred and sixty-eight) mg, 84 (eighty-four) strips | |
| One (1) repeat | |
| Six take away doses per week | |
| Additional instructions: Total daily dose is 14mg daily, taken with 1 film of Suboxone 8mg | |
| Rx Suboxone 8/2 mg sublingual film  2 (two) mg/ 3 (three) film daily  Maximum quantity: 168 (one hundred and sixty-eight) mg, 84 (eighty-four) strips  Mitte 1 (one) repeat  6 take-away doses per week | |
| To be dispensed at: Mortarpestles Pharmacy  125 Fourth Street, Splotswood | |
| William Pacemaker | |

**Example 5**

Prescription for a variable dose of methadone within the range of 90-100 mg (18-20 mL) daily, with take-away doses authorised for four times per week. The maximum quantity to be dispensed over 28 days, calculated according to the maximum daily dose in the range per day, is 560 ml. This is below the national guidelines limit, and a streamlined authority code can be used. Clear instructions on how to dispense the variable dosing regimen is included in the prescription.

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| Dr William Pacemaker  123 Medical Street  Ash Park VIC 3999  Tel: (03) 1234 5678  Prescriber No: 1234 567 | Mr Barry Patient  DOB: 06/07/1980  88 Luck Street  Forktown VIC 3131  Medicare No: 1234 56789 1 |
| Date: 01/07/2015 | |
| Streamline Authority Code (Methadone oral liquid) 14178\* | |
| Rx Methadone Liquid  5mg/mL | |
| 90-100 (ninety - one hundred) mg / 18-20 (eighteen-twenty) mL daily | |
| Maximum quantity: 560 (five hundred and sixty) mL | |
| One (1) repeat | |
| Take-away doses four times per week. | |
| Additional instructions: Commencing from 100mg daily, patient may elect to reduce dose by 2.5mg per week. | |
| Rx Methadone Liquid 5mg/mL  90-100 (ninety - one hundred) mg / 18-20 (eighteen-twenty) mL daily  Maximum quantity 560 (five hundred and sixty) mL  Mitte 1 (one) repeat  Take-away doses for Saturdays and Sundays | |
| To be dispensed at: Mortarpestles Pharmacy  125 Fourth Street, Splotswood | |
| William Pacemaker | |

\*Example code only.

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1. National guidelines for Medication-Assisted Treatment of Opioid Dependence 2014. Available at: [www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/national-guidelines-for-medication-assisted-treatment-of-opioid-dependence](http://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/national-guidelines-for-medication-assisted-treatment-of-opioid-dependence) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. **Note on authority codes:** Services Australia has provided a transitional PBS Authority Prescription Number and the PBS Authority Approval which can be used if you write a prescription ahead of 1 July 2023 – available on the [PBS website.](https://www.pbs.gov.au/files/opioid-dependence-treatment-program-files/ODT-medicines-Factsheet-for-Prescribers.pdf)

   Relevant PBS Authority Prescription Number/s and the PBS Authority Approval Numbers will be auto-generated in prescribing software from 1 July 2023, but can also be searched for via <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/search-for-existing-authority-using-online-pbs-authorities-hpos?context=22866> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)