

Supporting the safe use of high-risk medicines

What is SafeScript NSW?

SafeScript NSW is a computer software that allows prescribers and pharmacists to access real-time information about your prescription history for monitored medicines.

A prescriber is a health practitioner authorised to write prescriptions. For example, general practitioners (GPs), other medical specialists, dentists and nurse practitioners.

Monitored medicines are certain medicines with a high risk of harm. Such as strong pain relievers (opioids) and anti-anxiety or sleeping aids (benzodiazepines).

Monitored medicines have the potential to cause harm when taken in high doses or taken with other medicines. For this reason, it's important that your prescriber and pharmacist know what monitored medicines you are taking.

Prescribers, pharmacists and employees nominated by these prescribers who are directly involved in your care will also have access to key patient health information held by NSW Health. This enables them to fulfill their legal requirements for prescribing and/or supplying high-risk medicines.

Access to information about your monitored medicine prescriptions through SafeScript NSW helps your prescriber or pharmacist make safer clinical decisions about your care.



What medicines are monitored by SafeScript NSW?

The SafeScript NSW list of monitored medicines is based on recommendations made by a medical expert panel. These medicines have the potential to cause the most harm. The monitored medicines include:

Category	Medicine
Opioids (e.g. strong pain relievers)	Including but not limited to buprenorphine, codeine, fentanyl, hydromorphone, methadone, morphine, oxycodone, pethidine, tapentadol, tramadol
Benzodiazepines (e.g. tablets for anxiety or sleep)	Including but not limited to alprazolam, flunitrazepam, bromazepam, clobazam, clonazepam, diazepam, lorazepam, midazolam, nitrazepam, oxazepam, temazepam
Other sleeping aids	zolpidem, zopiclone
Psychostimulants (e.g. tablets for ADHD)	dexamfetamine, lisdexamfetamine, methylphenidate
Other monitored medicines	ketamine, pregabalin, quetiapine, cannabis based medicines in Schedule 8 All other Schedule 8 medicines not listed above

A full list of monitored medicines is included in the [Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Regulation 2008 \(Appendix E\)](#).

How does SafeScript NSW work?

SafeScript NSW provides your prescriber and pharmacist with access to a history of monitored medicines prescribed and supplied to you.

SafeScript NSW will also issue a notification to your prescriber or pharmacist where an alert has been raised based on your monitored medicines history.

An alert indicates that you may be at risk of harm, and will be triggered when you:

- are taking two or more medicines that when combined may become harmful, for example, certain opioids and benzodiazepines
- are taking high doses of opioids
- have visited multiple prescribers and pharmacies to receive prescriptions for monitored medicines within a short period of time.

Will SafeScript NSW prevent you from receiving your regular medicines?

No, SafeScript NSW alerts do not instruct your prescriber or pharmacist what to do or whether a medicine should or should not be prescribed or dispensed to you.

This decision remains with your prescriber and pharmacist. They are best placed to consult with you and use their professional judgement to determine whether the medicines prescribed or dispensed remain the safest and best option, based on your health needs and individual circumstances.

How is your privacy protected?

Your personal information will be held securely and handled in accordance with the *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998* and the *Health Records and Information Privacy Act 2002*. The storage, use and disclosure of your personal information will be subject to the NSW Health privacy policies. For more information visit the [NSW Health patient privacy information page](#).

Unauthorised access, use or disclosure of information held within the SafeScript NSW system is an offence under the *Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Regulation 2008*.

If you have been receiving monitored medicines or unsafe combinations from more than one prescriber, you could be at risk of harm. With access to this information, your prescriber may talk to you about the medicines you are prescribed or your health care. This could include better coordination of care, safely adjusting your doses or recommending alternative approaches to treatment.

Your information will only be held for as long as necessary for the purpose which it was collected or as otherwise required by law. Your information will be held securely and safely disposed of once it is no longer required.

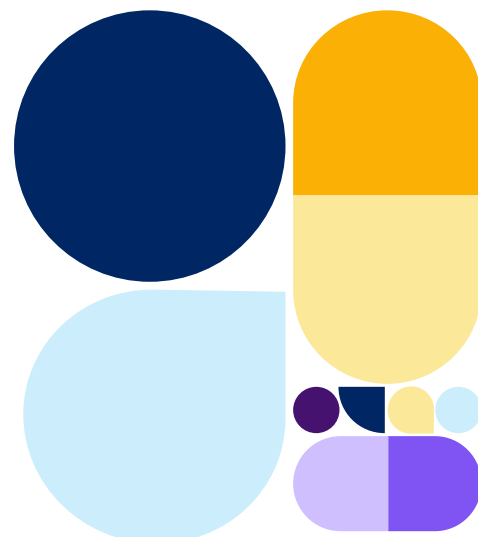
You may request access to or amendment of your personal information held by SafeScript NSW. For more information, email safescript@health.nsw.gov.au.

You can find more information on SafeScript NSW's privacy and security policies by going to the SafeScript NSW privacy and security page on the [SafeScript NSW website](#).

Who can you talk to for support?

If you have any questions about the medicines you are taking, you can contact:

- your GP or pharmacist in the first instance
- [Painaustralia's list of support groups and help lines](#) - find a support group or an online community that helps people living with pain find hope and understanding.
- [1300 MEDICINE](#) - speak to a registered pharmacist who can answer your questions about medication. Phone 1300 MEDICINE (1300 633 424).
- [Alcohol and Drug Information Service \(ADIS\) NSW](#) - a free and confidential helpline staffed by professional counsellors 24/7 for NSW residents with concerns around alcohol and/or drug misuse. Phone 1800 250 015 or web chat available Monday to Friday 8.30am – 5pm.
- [NSW Users and AIDS Association PeerLine](#) - a confidential peer-run telephone service that provides a non-judgmental team of peers who are trained to listen and offer referrals, support and individual advocacy to people who use drugs, who are on the opioid treatment program or who are seeking treatment across NSW. Phone 1800 644 413.





“SafeScript NSW is designed to create better safety around prescribing and dispensing monitored medications. It is intended to keep patients safe and is not meant to prevent supply of these medicines to those who need them.”

Person with lived experience of chronic pain

“SafeScript NSW is about having the ability for me and my provider to start a conversation about the risks and benefits of monitored medicines and to discuss the best possible health options available to return to a quality of life that I’m happy with.”

Person living with mental health issues



Where can you get more information about SafeScript NSW?

Further information is available on the SafeScript NSW website: www.safescript.health.nsw.gov.au

Unsafe use of monitored medicines is a major public health concern



In NSW, more people die from opioid overdoses than road accidents.



In 2019, there were 1,644 unintentional deaths due to overdoses in Australia. Of these, 429 (26%) deaths were due to pharmaceutical opioids.



Benzodiazepines are being increasingly identified in unintentional drug-induced deaths, especially when used in combination with opioids. There were 582 deaths involving benzodiazepines in 2019, accounting for a third (35%) of all unintentional drug-induced deaths.



SafeScript NSW (along with programs like Take Home Naloxone for opioid overdoses and public drug alerts) is part of NSW Health’s commitment to reduce harm from prescribed medications and help save lives in NSW.

Source: [Penington Institute Australia’s Annual Overdose Report 2021](#).