Using electronic prescribing in general practice

What is electronic prescribing?

Electronic prescribing (ePrescribing) is an alternative to paper prescribing and gives patients easier and more convenient access to prescribing services whilst enhancing safety by minimising the chances of transcription errors during dispensing. A prescriber uses their clinical software to generate an electronic prescription which is sent immediately and directly to the patient. This is a secure process facilitated by the prescription delivery service (PDS). This functionality is already installed in every major prescribing software program in Australia.

Electronic prescriptions (eScripts) are sent to a patient by their GP in the form of token. A token is received by the patient via a text message or email that the patient has nominated. A token contains a QR (quick response) code that is used by a pharmacy to download the prescription and dispense medication

Digital images of a paper prescription transmitted using a fax or email service do not constitute an electronic prescription.

eScripts also automatically appear on a patient's Active Script List (ASL) which is an online list of prescriptions that a nominated pharmacy can access to dispense a patient's medications without the need for the patient to present a token. Patients can access their Active Script List by entering a pharmacy-provided activation code into a conformant mobile app, such as the my health app.

Why use electronic prescribing?

Electronic prescribing enhances medicine safety and enables better management of prescriptions by both prescribers and patients. eScripts also remove issues around lost prescriptions as eScripts can be accessed from an Active Script List even if the patient cannot locate the SMS or email token. ePrescribing also supports virtual care by enabling prescribers to send, cancel and modify prescriptions remotely.

Benefits for general practice

- Improves medicines safety by reducing transcription errors
- Supplements delivery of telehealth services to ensure continuity of patient care
- Reduces administrative burden and handling of paper prescriptions
- Reduces issues of lost prescriptions
- Prescription data is encrypted, safe and secure
- Enables better control of prescriptions by prescribers

Benefits for patients

- Better management of prescriptions with compatible apps
- Active Script Lists enable patients to access prescriptions without a paper prescription or eScript token, removing risk of lost prescriptions
- Patients can access prescribing services from their doctor when circumstances prevent a face-to-face consultation

Example Scenario

Jordan has run out of their necessary medication while away from home on a road-trip and has lost their prescription.

General Practice with electronic prescribing	General Practice without electronic prescribing
Jordan receives eScripts for their medicines and has lost the SMS token.	Jordan has lost their paper prescription and must request a new prescription
Potential Outcomes: • Jordan authorises the pharmacy to access their Active Script List to dispense the medication • Jordan receives their prescribed supply of medication • The pharmacy transmits back to Jordan any remaining repeats as a new token, which also appears in their Active Script List • The practice is not contacted as no action is required from the GP	Potential Outcomes • Jordan contacts the practice for a telehealth appointment with the GP • Following a telehealth appointment, the GP faxes/emails a copy of the new prescription to the pharmacy and the practice must also post the paper prescription • The pharmacy may need to contact the GP to verify the prescription. • The pharmacy may only provide part supply in the absence of the original prescription. • The GP may not be immediately contactable, and Jordan may instead use a telehealth service to obtain an eScript for their medication
Patient Experience • Jordan has had a seamless experience and was able to get their medication when they needed to. • Jordan feels reassured for the future in case this happens again. They carry on with their travel.	Patient Experience • Jordan has been inconvenienced by preventable wait times, back and forth correspondence, and is anxious about the continuity of care with respect to their pain management. • They are potentially forced to delay further travel.

Resources

Acronyms			
ADHA:	Australian Digital Health Agency	**HPOS:**	Health Professional online services
ASL:	Active Script List	**HPI-O:**	Health provider identifier - organisation
CIS:	Clinical information system	**MHR:**	My Health Record
CSP:	Contracted Service Provider	**NASH:**	National Authentication Service for health
DHDA:	Department of Health, Disability and Ageing	**PDS:**	Prescription delivery service
eRX:	National (script exchange) service vendor	**PRODA:**	Provider Digital Access
HI:	Health Identifier	**QR:**	Quick response

Implementation Support

Checklists & overviews:	• [What is electronic prescribing? | ADHA](#) • [Setup overview | ADHA](#) • [How the PDS works | eRx Script Exchange](#) • [ePrescribing checklist | RACGP](#)
Capability:	• [Electronic prescribing conformance register | ADHA](#) • [software partners | eRx Script Exchange](#)
Compliance:	• [State & Territory regulations | ADHA](#) • [PBS regulatory framework | DHDA](#) • [Policy on security & access, privacy, and data | DHDA](#)
Access:	• [Set-up: HI's | PRODA | HPOS | NASH PKI](#) Ensure your practice and practitioners are set up with HI's, PRODA and HPOS and the practice has its security certificate in place. (Completed if MHR is set up and accessible via your CIS). • [Each prescriber is registered with the PDS | eRx Script Exchange](#) For system configuration, refer to your software guidance or contact your CSP
Learning:	• [Electronic Prescribing | Clinician Assist WA](#) (individual login required) • [Online Learning Portal | ADHA](#) eScripts and ASL in your practice | ASL for prescribers • [Heath Professional Education Resources | Services Australia](#) PRODA | HPOS | MBS | MyMedicare & More • [Electronic Prescribing Frequently Asked Questions | Practice Assist](#)