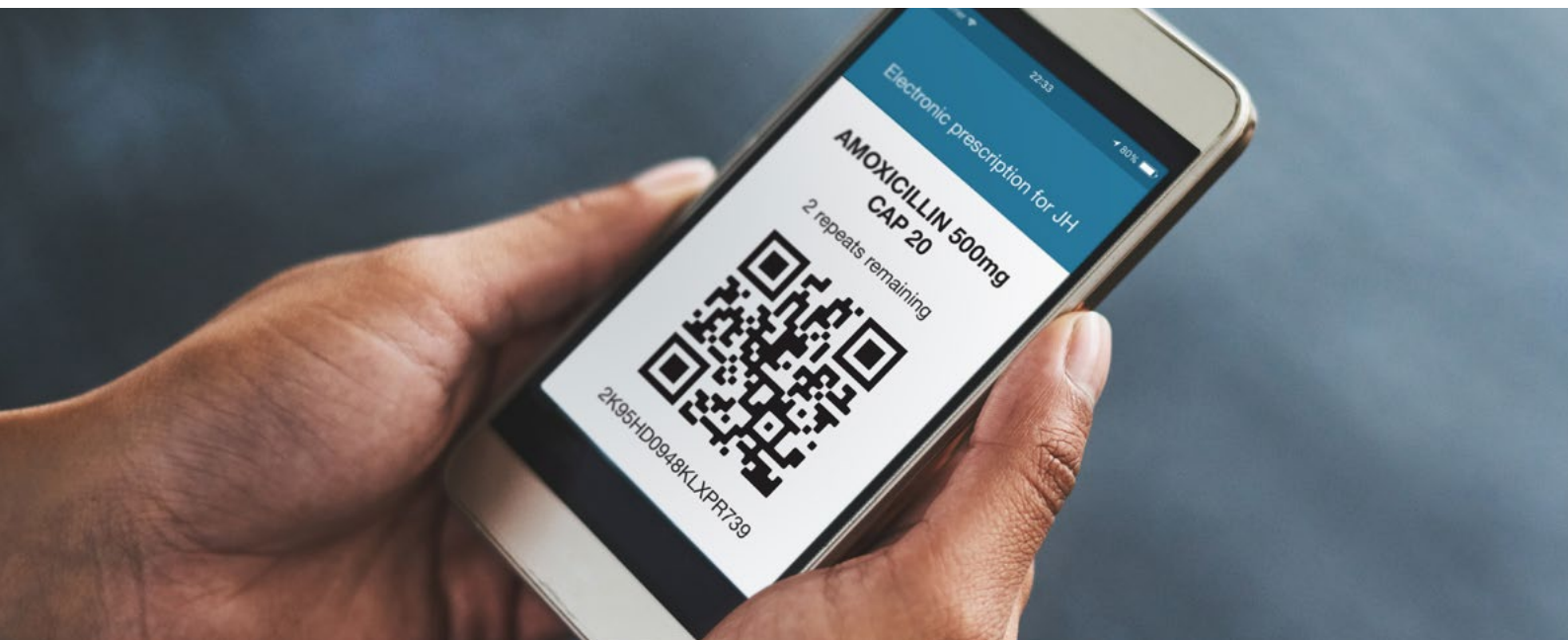


Electronic prescribing

Information for GPs



What is electronic prescribing?

Electronic prescriptions allow the prescribing and dispensing of medicines without the need for a paper prescription. Electronic prescribing provides enhanced convenience and choice for patients while improving medicines safety.

Electronic prescribing is an initiative introduced as part of the Australian Government's 2018–19 Health Portfolio Budget. Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) legislation has been changed to recognise an electronic prescription as an alternative to a paper prescription under the PBS. States and territories have also changed relevant legislation to recognise an electronic prescription as a legal form to allow the supply of medicines.

Patients can access their electronic prescription by receiving a **token** on their mobile device. From late 2021, patients will have the option of managing their available prescriptions using an **Active Script List** (ASL).

As at June 2021, over 10 million original and repeat electronic prescriptions have been issued in Australia.¹

Does electronic prescribing change my workflow?

Your prescribing workflow will vary slightly depending on the clinical information system (CIS) used at your practice, as each system varies in the way it presents options to issue an electronic prescription.

The workflow will generally follow these steps:

1. Go through the usual prescribing process
2. Check the patient's preference for an electronic or paper prescription
3. If the patient wants an electronic prescription, follow the CIS prompts to choose the method of token delivery (SMS, email or a printout)

What is a token?

A token is a **QR code** which is sent to the patient instead of issuing them a paper prescription. The electronic prescription information is stored in an encrypted and secure format by the electronic Prescription Delivery Service (eRx or MediSecure). A unique token is sent for each medicine prescribed. When the patient visits a pharmacy, the QR code is scanned to access the prescription so the pharmacy can dispense the medicine.

A number of mobile apps are now available to help patients manage their tokens. Some applications allow patients to order medicines from their preferred pharmacy and provide additional convenience so patients do not need to keep track of numerous SMSs and emails.

How do I send a token to the patient?

Your prescribing software sends the token to the patient either by SMS or email with a link to a unique QR code. You will also have the option of printing the token for the patient, if that is their preference. A printed token is not legally the same as a regular paper prescription and must be printed on plain paper (not prescription paper). A token printed on paper does not need to be signed as it is not a prescription in itself.

An SMS subsidy for sending electronic prescription tokens is currently in place. This means there is currently no cost to your practice for sending a prescription token via SMS.

What does a token look like?

The token is a QR code and displays the following information when sent as an SMS or email:

- Patient initials
- Medicine name, strength and quantity
- Date prescribed
- Number of repeats

What happens if the patient loses a token?

The token is not the legal prescription – it provides access to the legal electronic prescription held in the Prescription Delivery Service. Therefore, the token can be reissued, as the prescription can only ever be dispensed once.

What if the token is sent to the wrong number or email address?

You must cancel the prescription, which will invalidate the token. You should create a new prescription, and issue a new token.

Ensure patient details such as mobile phone number and email are up to date in your CIS prior to the consultation and confirm the token is received immediately upon prescribing, during the consultation.

Can a token be given to a third party (eg a caregiver)?

Yes. The patient may provide their carer's contact details for the carer to receive the token on their behalf. The patient can also forward their token to their caregiver, family member or other agent.

What is an Active Script List (ASL)?

An ASL is a list of a patient's active and available prescriptions, including repeats. The list is a token management solution that patients can register for at their pharmacy. When a prescription is generated, it appears in the patient's ASL, though the prescription is still stored in the encrypted and secure Prescription Delivery Service. Using an ASL means patients don't need to receive and keep their tokens (although they can request a token if they wish).

Additional benefits to the ASL include no more lost prescriptions for patients and a reduced risk in prescribing, transcription and dispensing errors. A pharmacy can dispense medicines from the ASL after confirming the patient's identity. A patient only ever has one ASL, but can give consent for multiple pharmacies to access their ASL.

If there are repeats, they will also appear in the ASL. Once a medicine has been dispensed, the prescription will no longer be visible in the patient's ASL, as it is no longer 'active'.

The ASL feature will be available in late 2021.

Is consent required?

When a patient registers for an ASL, they need to accept certain terms and conditions, including agreeing that all prescriptions appear in their ASL unless they ask for the prescription to be excluded. Patients must consent to a pharmacy or healthcare provider accessing their ASL. Once consent is given, all active prescriptions can be viewed by those with approved access. Patients can also choose to provide time-limited access to their ASL. If a prescriber has not been granted access, prescriptions they generate will still appear in the ASL for the patient or their pharmacy, or other healthcare providers with access to view.

What controls does a patient have over their ASL?

If a patient grants access to their ASL, the pharmacy or healthcare provider can see all current available prescriptions. Patients will be able to view and manage their ASL using an app.

If a patient has an ASL, what does it mean for me as their GP?

There is no change to the way GP prescribers will interact with patients if they have an ASL unless you choose to view the ASL.

If your patient has an ASL, they can request that a prescription is excluded from their ASL. You can do this via your CIS. In this case the patient will need to receive a token for their prescription, if prescribed electronically.

For specific details on how to exclude electronic prescriptions from a patient's ASL please contact your software provider directly.

How do patients who take multiple medicines use electronic prescriptions?

Patients will receive one token per medicine they are prescribed. Some patients may have difficulty managing multiple tokens, so ensure they are aware of this prior to prescribing an electronic prescription. Mobile apps can make tokens easier for some patients.

The ASL will make it easier for patients with multiple medicines to manage their prescriptions. Patients will no longer need to present a token to their pharmacy if they have set up their ASL and provided consent to their pharmacy to access their ASL.

Disclaimer

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How do patients access repeat prescriptions?

You do not need to do anything differently to issue an electronic prescription with a repeat. Your patient will receive one token from you for the original prescription, and when the medicine is dispensed, the pharmacy will issue the patient with a new token for the next repeat prescription. The original token will then be void.

Can I still use paper prescriptions?

Yes. Electronic prescriptions are not mandatory, and paper prescriptions will continue to be an option for you and your patients.

Once the form of a prescription (paper or electronic) is chosen, the prescription will stay in that form for its entirety (eg a paper prescription cannot have its repeats delivered as an electronic prescription).

How do I prepare my practice for electronic prescribing?

Refer to the RACGP's [electronic prescribing checklist](#).

Where can I find more information?

- RACGP – [Electronic prescribing](#)
- Australian Digital Health Agency – [Electronic prescribing information for prescribers](#)
- Australian Government Department of Health – [Electronic prescribing](#)

Reference

1. Australian Digital Health Agency. Electronic prescribing: For prescribers. Available at www.digitalhealth.gov.au/healthcare-providers/initiatives-and-programs/electronic-prescribing/for-prescribers [Accessed 24 June 2021].