

Dear Prescriber,

Re: MATOD guidelines during Covid-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact upon individuals, health care systems and societies in Australia and elsewhere. Health services have had to adapt rapidly to the changing conditions for patients and health workers to reduce the spread of COVID-19, and to respond to individuals with (suspected) infection.

Measures to support physical distancing were introduced in March 2020, to protect the health of those in MATOD who may be at increased risk during the COVID-19 pandemic. Changes to minimise face-to-face requirements for MATOD, by providing longer prescription durations, allowing for more takeaway doses and third-party collection of doses were all introduced [where clinically appropriate](#).

It is important to note that these measures remain in place for the duration of Victoria's public health emergency directives.

The maintenance of these contingencies is important as the state and federal governments work to complete the vaccination program for the Victorian population, in combination with the possibility of further snap lockdowns in the short- to medium-term. While there are plans to review these policy changes when safe enough to do so, they will remain in place as long as COVID-19 poses an ongoing risk to the Victorian public.

Please refer to the “Revised Policy for maintenance of opioid dependence”, available at the [Department of Health Pharmacotherapy policy page](#) for specific details of the policy changes put in place last year.

For advice around pharmacotherapy scenarios which may fall outside these revised guidelines, please contact your local [Pharmacotherapy Area-Based Network](#) or, outside of regular working hours, the [Drug and Alcohol Clinical Advisory Service](#).

Helpful advice for pharmacotherapy clients can be accessed through the [Pharmacotherapy Advocacy, Mediation and Support](#) service and at [Harm Reduction Victoria's website](#)

Your pharmacy will be notified when the pharmacotherapy COVID-19 guidelines are no longer active. A transition period will likely be required to support any long-term policy changes to the physical distancing currently in place for pharmacotherapy.

Kind regards,

AOD Policy and Commissioning team

Mental Health Division

Department of Health