General questions about SafeScript

What is SafeScript?
SafeScript is computer software that provides doctors and pharmacists involved in your care with a comprehensive history of the high-risk medicines you have been prescribed. This information enables your doctor and pharmacist to make safer clinical decisions and helps them to identify circumstances where you may be receiving potentially harmful medicines beyond medical need.

Why is SafeScript being implemented?
The increasing harms from certain high-risk prescription medicines such as opioids and benzodiazepines are a major public health concern.

Individuals can develop dependence on these medicines, even when they are taken short-term for conditions like pain or anxiety.

In 2017, there were 414 Victorian drug overdose deaths involving pharmaceutical medicines; higher than the number of overdose deaths involving illicit drugs (271), and higher than the road toll (258).

What medicines are included in SafeScript?
Prescription medicines that are causing the greatest harm to the Victorian community are monitored through SafeScript.

These medicines have been recommended based on the latest international and local research and include:

- strong prescription painkillers such as morphine (brand names include Kapanol) and oxycodone (brand names include OxyContin and Endone)
- all benzodiazepines (brand names include Valium)
- zolpidem or zopiclone sleeping tablets (brand names include Stilnox and Imovane)
- quetiapine (brand names include Seroquel)
- codeine-containing prescription painkillers (brand names include Panadeine Forte).

What information is recorded in SafeScript?
Existing information which is provided by doctors and pharmacists when a prescription is supplied is recorded in SafeScript. This information includes: patient name, address, details of medicines supplied (name, strength and quantity), and doctor and pharmacy details. It does not include other doctor’s files or medical notes.

Who has access to SafeScript?
Doctors, nurse practitioners and pharmacists who are involved in your care may view information about your prescription history in SafeScript to ensure the supply of prescription medicines is safe for you.

Authorised Department of Health and Human Services officers also access SafeScript as part of their regulatory role in ensuring the safe supply of medicines in the community.
Does SafeScript prevent me from receiving my regular medicines?

SafeScript does not instruct your doctor or pharmacist on what to do or decide whether a medicine should or should not be prescribed to you. This clinical decision remains with your doctor or pharmacist to determine whether the medicines prescribed to you remain the safest and best option for your medical needs.

If you have been receiving the same medicines, or unsafe combinations, from more than one doctor without each doctor knowing, you could be at risk of harm. Your doctor may consider changes for your safety which might include better coordination of care, safely adjusting your medicine doses or recommending alternative approaches to managing issues such as pain, anxiety or insomnia.

Have doctors and pharmacists been given training or support to use SafeScript?

As part of the roll out of SafeScript, comprehensive training has been made available to doctors and pharmacists on how to use the system, the safer prescribing and dispensing of high-risk medicines as well as respectfully responding to the needs of patients. This training will give your doctor and pharmacist the confidence and skills to continue to provide you with the safest and most appropriate level of ongoing care.

Your doctor can also access the SafeScript GP Clinical Advisory Service for additional support and advice from addiction medicine specialists and specially trained GPs in pain, anxiety and mental health conditions. This service can assist your GP in ensuring that you continue to receive the safest and most appropriate ongoing care for your medical needs.

In addition, all medical clinics and pharmacies were provided an information pack at the start of the roll out of SafeScript to help prepare and set up the system in their practice.

Does my doctor or pharmacist need my permission to access my record in SafeScript?

Doctors, nurse practitioners and pharmacists who are involved in your care are authorised under law to access information about your prescription history in SafeScript, without your express permission, for the purpose of ensuring your safety when prescribing or dispensing high-risk prescription medicines.

From April 2020 it will be mandatory for your doctor, nurse practitioner or pharmacist to check SafeScript before prescribing or dispensing a monitored medicine.

Privacy and data security

How is my privacy protected under law?

There are offences and strict penalties under the Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Act 1981 for improper or unauthorised use of SafeScript.

A log is created each time your details are viewed in SafeScript and this is monitored by the Department of Health and Human Services. If inappropriate use is detected, penalties will apply under Victorian law and the matter may be referred to the Medical or Pharmacy Board for investigation and possible disciplinary action.

Health professionals must always adhere to privacy requirements set out in the Health Records Act 2001 and Privacy Act 1988 when handling your health information. The Health Privacy Principles and Australian Privacy Principles specify the circumstances where health professionals can access, collect, use or disclose your health information.

If you have a concern about the way a health professional has handled your information, you may contact the Health Complaints Commissioner <https://hcc.vic.gov.au/make-complaint> on 1300 582 113.

How does SafeScript keep my records secure?

SafeScript is aligned with the national data security standards for government ICT systems set out by the Commonwealth Department of Defence to ensure your information is protected.

Data transmitted between medical practice systems, pharmacy systems and the SafeScript database is encrypted at all times and occurs through a secure, encrypted internet connection. Data stored in the SafeScript database is also encrypted at all times.
SafeScript also utilises contemporary security measures to safeguard your data against unauthorised access. Health professionals will be required to use multi-factor authentication (a username/password + PIN) in order to access the system.

The security of the system is routinely tested and reviewed to ensure data stored in SafeScript remains protected.

**Can I opt-out of SafeScript?**

SafeScript is not an opt-out system.

When a prescription medicine is supplied, the law requires pharmacists to record the details of the prescription. The law also requires these records for high-risk medicines to be provided to SafeScript.

The collection of prescription records by SafeScript for high-risk medicines is necessary to provide doctors and pharmacists with access to a complete record of supply to ensure patients do not receive more medicines than they medically need.

**Can I request access to view my records in SafeScript?**

As SafeScript is used to support clinical decision-making, only health professionals have access to SafeScript. Should you wish to view your records in SafeScript, you may submit a Freedom of Information (FOI) request to the department.

Further information on how to submit an FOI request is available on the [health.vic FOI page](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/foi).

**Can I correct a record in SafeScript if I believe it is incorrect?**

Information in SafeScript is sourced from records created at medical clinics and pharmacies where your prescriptions are issued or dispensed.

SafeScript does not alter records from medical or pharmacy systems. If you believe there is an error in a record, you may request the doctor or pharmacist involved in providing your prescription medicine to review the record. If the record is amended, the information will be automatically updated in SafeScript.

**Is SafeScript the same as My Health Record?**

SafeScript and My Health Record are not the same.

My Health Record is a patient-controlled summary of your health records, in which you can choose what is included and who can view your medication history.

SafeScript is a system independent of My Health Record.

**Support and further information**

**Where can I access support?**

Through the SafeScript initiative, patients and health professionals are becoming more aware and understanding of the risks and harms from some prescription medicines. If you are taking a high-risk medicine, your doctor or pharmacist may initiate conversations with you about your medicines to make sure they remain safe for you.

If you have concerns about your use of prescription medicines or that of a family member or friend, counselling and support is available.

**SafeScript Pharmaceutical Helpline – 1800 737 233**

The SafeScript Pharmaceutical Helpline is available 24 hours a day, providing free and confidential advice, support and referral for people concerned about their use of prescription medicines. The helpline is staffed by specially trained nurses and counsellors.

**Reconnexion – 1300 273 266**
Reconnexion is a service providing confidential support for people experiencing anxiety disorders, depression and benzodiazepine dependency. In addition to a friendly and discrete telephone support service (available between 9am and 5pm), Reconnexion has a range of resources with helpful information about anxiety, depression, benzodiazepines and insomnia.

**Where can I get further information?**

**General information about SafeScript**

Further information is available on the [SafeScript page](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/safescript).

You can also contact the [SafeScript General Enquiries Team](mailto:safescript@dhhs.vic.gov.au) via email.

**Better Health Channel**

The Better Health Channel provides health and medical information to improve the health and well-being of people and the communities they live in.