

Victorian Supercare Pharmacies Initiative

Frequently asked questions

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What is the Victorian Supercare Pharmacies Initiative

The Victorian Government Supercare Pharmacies Initiative combines a 24-hour a day seven days a week pharmacy service and an evening nursing service between 6pm and 10pm. These pharmacies are known as Supercare Pharmacies.

The Victorian Government has committed to introducing 20 Supercare Pharmacies, with at least five to be located in regional Victoria. Existing local pharmacies will be supported by the Government to provide this extra service.

For many families and individuals, minor injury and illness are experienced outside business hours with a trip to the local hospital sometimes the only option available. A Supercare Pharmacy provides another option for face-to-face advice and care after hours.

How much has been budgeted for the Victorian Government Supercare Pharmacies Initiative?

The Victorian Government has committed \$28.7 million to introduce 20 Supercare Pharmacies by 2018.

What services are offered in a Supercare Pharmacy?

Supercare Pharmacies will enable 24-hour access to pharmacists for advice, supply of medicines and dispensing of prescriptions.

The onsite nurse available every night between 6pm and 10pm will provide:

- physical assessment
- support and advice for minor illness and injury
- some immunisations, including influenza and whooping cough
- health screening, assessment and advice for illness prevention, including blood pressure checks, blood sugar testing and weight management
- sexual health advice
- basic psychological wellbeing review
- referral information to a range of local services.

How did you select the Supercare Pharmacies?

The Department of Health and Human Services selected the first five pharmacies via a competitive tender process that specified a number of evaluation criteria. Some criteria, such as location and clinical governance, were weighted and subject to a scoring system.

A panel of departmental staff and relevant experts evaluated the tender submissions.

The location criterion included a set of local government areas identified as preferred (although not exclusive) locations on the basis of the department's analysis of existing after-hours services. The quality and location of tender proposals was evaluated against the criteria and the resulting five pharmacies were selected.

Where are the first five Supercare Pharmacies located?

The first five Supercare Pharmacies are located in:

- Ascot Vale (Ascot Vale Pharmacy)
- Craigieburn (Amcal Pharmacy Craigieburn)
- Wantirna South (Pharmacy@Knox)
- Yarraville (Carnovale Pharmacy)
- Ballarat (UFS Dispensaries).

When will the remaining tenders open?

There will be two more stages in the Supercare Pharmacies project. Seven Supercare Pharmacies are scheduled to commence by June 2017 and a further eight pharmacies by June 2018.

Why are you only opening five rather than the full 20 by June 2016?

Using a staged approach to opening the 20 Supercare Pharmacies by 2018 allows us to:

- Firstly, open a small number, and
- Secondly, apply the lessons learnt from the first group to future Supercare Pharmacies.

Will this initiative reduce emergency department presentations? How will you measure this?

This service is not likely to impact on the overall number of emergency department presentations.

For minor complaints, this service offers an alternative choice to consumers considering attending a local hospital emergency department after hours.

The service will be evaluated on an ongoing basis. Part of this evaluation will examine consumer demand, including asking clients where they would have gone to seek care if this service was not available.

What kind of security will be present at the pharmacies?

Victorian pharmacies are already required to comply with security standards specified by the Victorian Pharmacy Authority.

Selection of successful tenderers was based on a competitive process including evaluation of security plans, incident governance arrangements and strategies for appropriate escalation should they be needed.

Each pharmacy will have a security guard on site at night-time. The nursing service will work with the pharmacy to ensure suitable security protocols are in place. This includes having the nursing consultation room within line of sight of the pharmacist. If the situation requires, appropriate emergency services will attend.

How will a Supercare Pharmacy interact with existing health services?

The Supercare Pharmacies Initiative will support and strengthen the local primary care system across our communities and complement existing services, increasing after-hours care options.

Pharmacy service

What hours will the pharmacies be open?

Pharmacies will be open 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

A pharmacist will be present and available for usual pharmacy services 24 hours per day.

Why is the Victorian Government funding the Supercare Pharmacy Initiative? For many people, access to medicines and health advice is required at night when general practice and other services may not be available. The Supercare Pharmacy Initiative sees the coming together of an experienced nursing service for four hours a night (6pm – 10 pm), with an extended hours pharmacy (24 hours a day, seven days a week) offering choice and filling a gap in advice, support and treatment for many people.

Pharmacies already have a trusted role within the community and are well placed to bridge some of this gap.

Isn't this the responsibility of owners if they choose to open longer?

Unfortunately, it is not always financially sustainable for pharmacists to operate around the clock. The Supercare Pharmacy Initiative will enable access for all Victorians when required to medicines and health advice in the after-hours period when local doctors or other medical services may not be available.

Nursing service

Why were nurses chosen for this initiative?

Nurses are well-respected and trusted members of Victoria's healthcare sector. They are highly skilled and well placed to deal with minor illnesses and injuries.

How will the nursing service work with the pharmacy?

The Supercare nursing service is professionally independent of the community pharmacy. Whilst nurses and pharmacists have separate scopes of professional practice, they will work together as required to achieve optimal patient outcomes.

Is the service free to consumers?

Yes. There is no consultation fee associated with seeing a nurse at a Supercare Pharmacy. Medical supplies used by the nurse during the consultation will not attract a fee either.

Patients may choose to purchase additional products from the pharmacy.

Will consumers need a Medicare card to access nursing services?

No. The service is available to all Victorians and visitors to the state.

What kind of patients will the nurses see?

Nurses operating under the initiative will provide assessment, support and treatment for minor ailments, as well as being available to offer lifestyle advice and health information.

How will patients be prioritised?

Patients will be seen on a first-come, first-seen basis, unless a patient presents with a medical emergency. If the patient's condition warrants a higher level of care, the patient will be directed to the closest appropriate service.

Will patients be able to receive immunisations at the pharmacy?

Yes. Nurses will be available to administer vaccinations, including whooping cough and influenza vaccinations. They will also be able to administer those prescribed by a doctor.

Do patients need to make appointments to see the nurse?

No. Patients will be seen on a first-come, first-seen basis.

What if someone presents at 9.55pm and there are already people waiting?

All patients who present before 10pm will be seen.

Patients will also be provided information of other appropriate services to support consumer choice.

What if someone turns up at 10.05pm and there are people still waiting?

The Supercare Pharmacy will have procedures and protocols in place to deal with people who arrive just after 10pm.

After 10pm, the pharmacist is responsible for assessing patients, as is usual practice in a community pharmacy. Pharmacists will use clinical judgement to respond appropriately or direct the patient to suitable services.

What if there is an emergency situation with a patient and it is 10pm – will the nurse stay late?

The nursing service will have procedures and protocols in place to ensure the patient is transitioned to an appropriate level of care. The nurse will stay until this is resolved.

What happens if the nurse needs to refer the patient to a GP?

In some cases, the most appropriate form of treatment may be available from a general practitioner.

Nurses may suggest that patients see their regular GP when the GP is available.

The Supercare Pharmacy nurse may suggest local after-hours or other medical services.

With the patient's consent, the nurse will provide a written summary for the patient's GP that details the patient's presenting complaint and any treatment the nurse has initiated.

How will the nurses be recruited?

This is the responsibility of the successful nursing services.

Will the nurses be managed by the pharmacists?

No. Although the nurses will work closely with pharmacy staff, they will be independent services and therefore be professionally accountable within their own scope of practice.

Can patients get prescriptions from the Supercare Pharmacy nurse?

The nurses available in a Supercare Pharmacies are not able to provide prescriptions.

If medical review is required, nurses will suggest other appropriate health service providers.

Will the nurse just refer patients to a GP?

Many consumers do not need the complex diagnostic services of a GP immediately. This service will allow the consumer to get reassurance and support, foster self-care and make best use of GP services if and when needed.

For more information visit: <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/primary-and-community-health/primary-care/pharmacy>.