

SafeScript Initiative

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is this initiative about?

A: The Victorian Government is taking action to reduce the increasing harms and deaths from misuse of prescription medicines.

The Government has committed to the implementation of SafeScript system in Victoria and a supporting workforce plan.

Q: What is SafeScript?

A: SafeScript is computer software that allows pharmacy dispensing records for certain medicines to be transmitted in real-time to a centralised database which can then be accessed by doctors and pharmacists during a consultation.



Q: Why is SafeScript necessary?

A: The misuse of prescription medicines and the increasing number of deaths associated with prescription shopping, where patients visit multiple doctors to obtain prescription medicines in excess of medical need without each doctor knowing that the

patient had attended other doctors, are a major public health concern.

Deaths in Victoria	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Pharmaceutical medicines	275	306	313	316	330	372
Illicit drugs	153	133	166	164	217	257
Road toll	287	282	243	248	252	291

In 2016, there were 372 Victorian drug overdose deaths involving pharmaceutical medicines, higher than the number of overdose deaths involving illicit drugs (257), and higher than the road toll (291). In the latest Ambulance Victoria data (2014-15), there were more ambulance callouts for misuse of pharmaceutical medicines (9,941) than for illicit drugs (9,038).

SafeScript will provide doctors and pharmacists with a clinical tool to help make safer clinical decisions, stop patients who are prescription shopping, and facilitate the early identification and referral of patients who are developing signs of addiction to counselling and more appropriate treatment.

Q: What will this initiative provide?

A: The scale of this initiative is an Australian first. SafeScript software will be available across over 1,900 medical clinics, 1,300 pharmacies and 200 hospitals in Victoria. It will provide clinicians with up-to-the-minute dispensing histories for their patients during a consultation.

In addition to the roll out of the software, there will be a comprehensive package of workforce projects to assist clinicians during implementation. This will include training and support packages for doctors and pharmacists as well as some enhancements to existing counselling and treatment services for patients who may be misusing prescription medicines or receiving supplies of high risk medicines beyond therapeutic needs.

Q: What training will be provided to clinicians?

A: A key component of this initiative is the provision of training and development programs for doctors and pharmacists to ensure successful uptake of the system. This includes:

- safe and appropriate prescribing of high risk medicines
- drug counselling skills and engaging in conversations with patients around prescription medicine misuse and tapering of prescription medicines
- how information in the SafeScript system may be used to inform clinical decisions and regulatory obligations

The Victorian Government has engaged Western Victoria Primary Health Network, as lead for a consortium comprising all Victorian Primary Health Networks and NPS MedicineWise, to develop and deliver this training.

Q: What other activities will be included?

A: Other activities include:

- Enhancements to existing addiction counselling and treatment services for patients who may be misusing prescription medicines or receiving supplies of high risk medicines beyond therapeutic needs
- Communications campaign and information leaflets for medical clinics and pharmacies to raise community awareness on the need for SafeScript to ensure the safer use of medicines

Q: What medicines will be monitored by the system?

A: Based on the latest international and local research and recommendations from the project expert advisory group, the system will monitor prescription medicines that are causing the greatest harm to the Victorian community.

These include all Schedule 8 medicines, such as oxycodone (brand names include OxyContin and Endone), morphine (brand names include Kapanol), alprazolam (brand names include Xanax and Kalma), methylphenidate (brand names include Ritalin) and dexamphetamine.

Other medicines to be monitored include all benzodiazepines such as diazepam (brand names include Valium), 'Z-drugs' such as zolpidem (brand names include Stilnox), as well as quetiapine (brand names include Seroquel).

Codeine will also be monitored, but it will be included at a later stage. This will allow clinicians time to adjust to the rescheduling of over the counter codeine products to Prescription Only by the Therapeutic Goods Administration from February 2018.

Q: How will this initiative impact current arrangements for prescribing and dispensing for these medicines in Victoria?

A: Currently, there are provisions under drugs and poisons legislation to address prescription shopping which require doctors to apply for a treatment permit when prescribing Schedule 8 medicines for more than eight weeks. These arrangements did not envisage the scale to which these medicines are now prescribed in primary care settings and are not adequately addressing prescription shopping. As part of the implementation of SafeScript, the arrangements for treatment permits will be comprehensively reviewed and streamlined to take advantage from the information available in the system to assist prescribers to coordinate treatments.

Q: Where can I get further information?

A: Further information is available on the SafeScript website or click [here](#).

The SafeScript implementation team can be contacted on 9096 5633 or via email safescript@dhhs.vic.gov.au.

To receive this publication in an accessible format phone 9096 5633, using the National Relay Service 13 36 77 if required, or email safescript@dhhs.vic.gov.au

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