

Controlled Drug Factsheet

When prescribing controlled drugs:

- Check that the CD and dose reflect patient's clinical needs
- Include precise dosage instructions
- Do not exceed a maximum dose of 120mg morphine equivalent daily
- Only escalate doses following a full clinical review
- Ask if patient has supplies at home
- Prescribe for a maximum of 30 days
- Inform patient that schedule 2, 3 and 4 CD prescriptions are valid for 28 days
- Use EPS and prescribe the CD on a separate prescription
- Agree face to face review process with patient
- Document all relevant information clearly in patient's record
- Confirm pharmacy nomination
- Schedule 2 and 3 CDs cannot be prescribed on repeat dispensing prescriptions



When dispensing controlled drugs:

- Check validity of prescription
- Ensure dosage instructions are legal and sufficient
- Check packaging security seal is intact
- If not security sealed, open pack and count contents
- Check expiry date
- Confirm label is accurate. Do not cover important information
- A different person to carry out the final check
- prescriptions for schedule 2, 3 or 4 CDs must be dispensed and collected within 28 days from the date on the prescription
- Inform patient if any balance owed and when to collect by
- Send 'dispense' notification after the CD has been collected, within a month of dispensed date
- Send 'claim' notification by the 5th of the following month



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When prescribing controlled drugs:

- ✓ confirm any recent opioid and any other analgesic medicines prescribed for the patient
- ✓ check the person's current clinical needs and, if appropriate, adjust the dose until a good balance is achieved between benefits and harms
- ✓ dose escalation of controlled drugs is not permitted unless a full clinical review has taken place
- ✓ in the patient's record, document clearly the indication and regimen for the controlled drug as well as clear instructions for when and how to take or use the drug
- ✓ include dosage instructions on the prescription, with the maximum daily amount or frequency of doses if appropriate. Do not exceed a maximum dose of 120mg morphine equivalent daily, which includes the cumulative dose of concomitant controlled drugs
- ✓ ask about and take into account any existing supplies the patient has of "when required" controlled drugs
- ✓ prescribe enough of a controlled drug to meet the person's clinical needs for no more than 30 days. In exceptional circumstances where the prescriber believes a supply of more than 30 days is clinically indicated and would not pose an unacceptable threat to patient safety, the prescriber should document the reasons for this in the patient's record
- ✓ prescribe controlled drugs electronically via EPS in the same way other prescriptions are processed. The system will automatically populate quantities in both words and figures in the prescription message
- ✓ prescribe the CD on a separate prescription (token) because prescription with both CDs and non CD items will carry two different expiry dates. A prescription for Schedule 2, 3 and 4 CDs is only valid for 28 days from the date it was generated. It will also make record keeping easier if CDs were on a separate prescription
- ✓ discuss and agree with the patient the arrangements for reviewing and monitoring treatment. Face-to-face consultations are considered best practice especially for dose escalation
- ✓ advise patients who already have a pharmacy nomination that their Schedule 2 and 3 CDs will be sent automatically to that pharmacy
- ✓ be prepared to discuss the prescribing decision with other health professionals if further information is requested about the prescription
- ✓ EPS cannot be used for prescribing in instalments (FP10MDA prescribing) for example, daily methadone
- ✓ Schedule 2 and 3 CDs cannot be prescribed on repeat dispensing prescriptions

[Mid Essex Opioid Resource Pack for Practices link](#)

When dispensing controlled drugs:

- ✓ check validity. On top of the normal prescription requirements for prescription only medicines, prescriptions for Schedule 2 and 3 CDs must also contain: the dose, the form, the strength (where appropriate) and the total quantity or dosage units in both words and figures
- ✓ an EPS prescription for a Schedule 2 or 3 CD should be dispensed like any other electronic prescription
- ✓ check that the dose instructions are sensible and suitable; "as directed" is insufficient
- ✓ unless security sealed, where an original pack is being dispensed, open the pack and count the contents. Check the expiry date
- ✓ confirm the label states the correct patient name, correct drug, brand, form, strength and quantity
- ✓ affix the label to the box taking care not to cover any text
- ✓ if a pharmacist has performed a clinical check prior to dispensing the prescription, an Accredited Checking Technician may perform the final check
- ✓ in all other circumstances, it is highly recommended that a pharmacist performs the final check. It is not recommended for the person who dispenses the prescription to perform the final check
- ✓ for EPS prescriptions, when the prescription is dispensed within a given month, send the dispense notification after the medication has been collected and within that month (physically marking the EPS dispensing token (FP10DT) is not a suitable method as it is not the legal prescription). Then, send the claim notification which must be received by NHS Prescription Services before midnight on the 5th of following month
- ✓ a signature can be captured on the back of a dispensing or prescription token and these tokens must be sent to NHS Prescription Services in the same month the claim is submitted
- ✓ prescriptions for schedule 2, 3 or 4 CDs must be dispensed within 28 days from the date on the prescription
- ✓ in the case of owings, the balance of prescriptions for Schedule 2, 3 or 4 CDs cannot be dispensed later than 28 days after the date on the prescription. It is good practice to inform the patient or representative at the outset that they will not be able to collect the owing balance after the 28 day period has elapsed
- ✓ for prescriptions for Schedule 5 CDs, the balance of an owing cannot be collected more than 6 months after the appropriate date

[NHSBSA endorsement guidance link](#)

[NHS Controlled Drug reporting link](#)