FOR SPECIALIST PRACTICES

Electronic Prescriptions

The following user guide provides guidance on using electronic prescriptions in your practice, including:

- current and future electronic prescription methods,
- the electronic prescribing process and its benefits,
- the patient journey, and
- supporting patients with the change.

Together this information will support you with understanding and providing electronic prescriptions to your patients.

Note: The current guide assumes that electronic prescription capability has been set up in your practice. The Electronic Prescriptions Implementation Guide provides step-by-step details to assist in the set-up process.

STEP **1** **ELECTRONIC PRESCRIPTION OPTIONS**

+ **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

STEP **2** **ELECTRONIC PRESCRIBING PROCESS**

STEP **4** **SUPPORTING PATIENTS**

STEP **3** **THE PATIENT JOURNEY**

Australian Government
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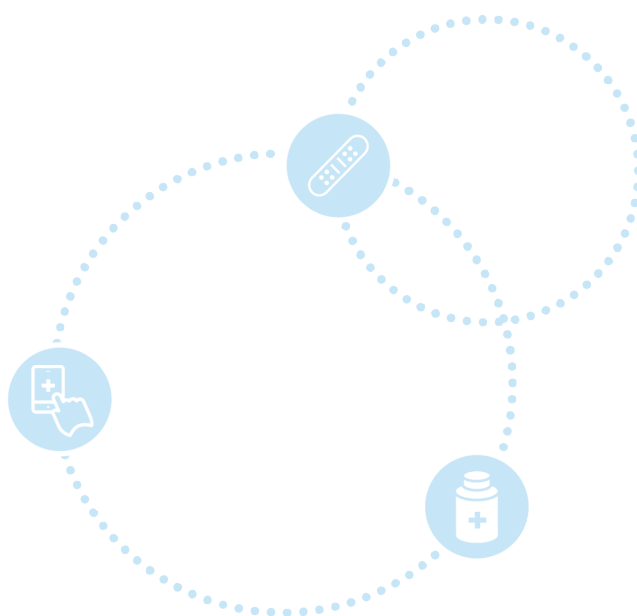
Electronic prescription options

A patient will have two different ways to access their electronic prescription: via a token and the Active Script List (ASL). Using tokens has been launched and is now in use. The ASL is currently in development and this additional functionality is being rolled out now across the country.

ELECTRONIC PRESCRIPTIONS VIA THE TOKEN[1]

The patient will receive an SMS or email containing information including their initials, a QR code and some information about their medicine. The patient can take or send this 'token' to their chosen pharmacy. The token is used by the pharmacy to unlock the legal prescription and dispense the prescribed medicine. Prescribers should check with their local pharmacies if they have electronic prescription dispensing capabilities. See the Electronic Prescriptions Implementation Guide for guidance on communicating with local pharmacies.

ELECTRONIC PRESCRIPTIONS VIA THE ASL[2]

The ASL is a securely stored list of active prescriptions that, on consent from a patient, allows healthcare professional(s) to access, view and dispense an electronic prescription. Upon confirmation of a patient's identity, a pharmacist can access and dispense a patient's electronic prescription directly from the ASL without the need to scan a token. The ASL will make managing electronic prescriptions and ongoing repeats easier and more convenient for patients.

Electronic prescribing process

The token has been designed to minimise the amount of workflow change required from healthcare providers issuing an electronic prescription. The sections below demonstrate both the technical process and clinical workflow for providing electronic prescriptions to patients.

TECHNICAL PROCESS[3]

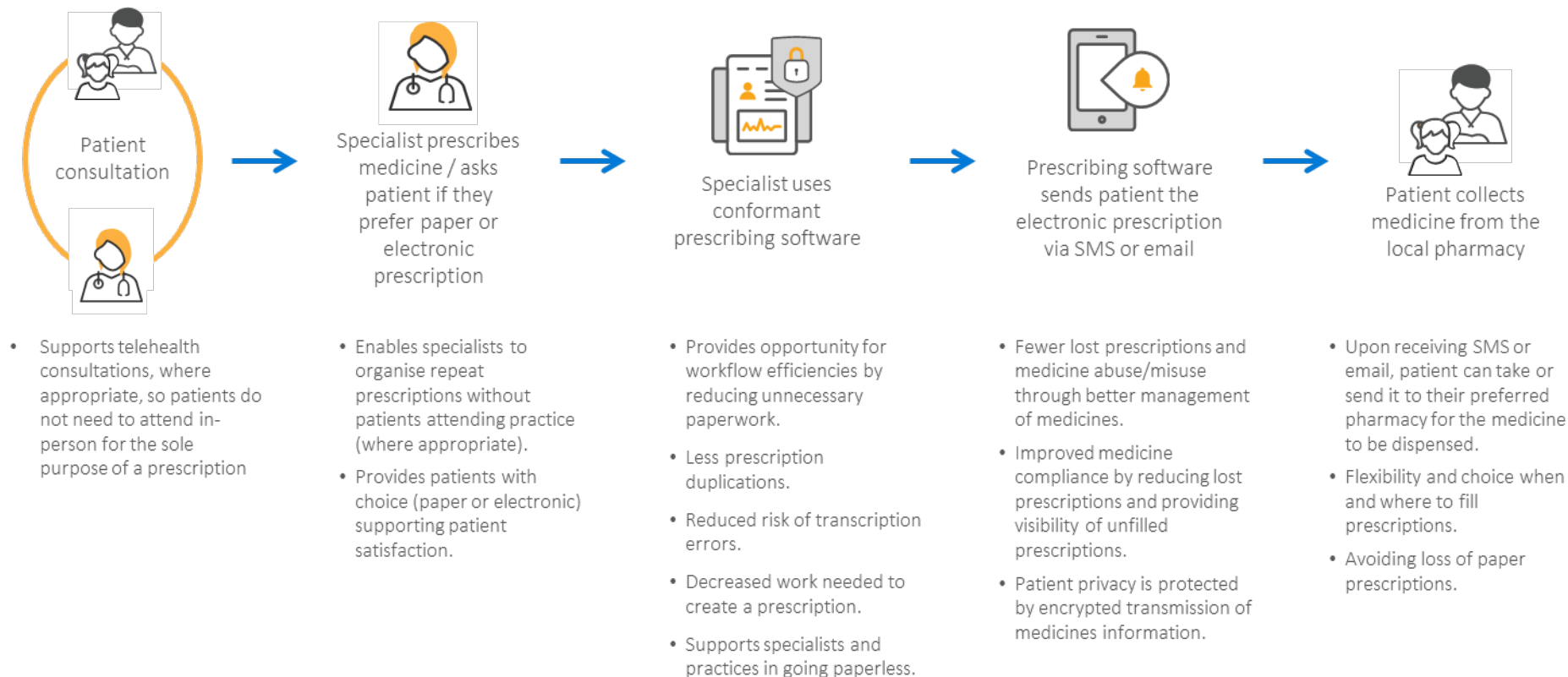The technical process for electronic prescribing is outlined below.

1. Electronic prescriptions are generated by an authorised prescriber using a conformant clinical information system (CIS).
2. The electronic prescription is sent from the CIS to the Prescription Delivery Service (PDS) in an encrypted format.
3. The electronic prescription resides in the PDS and contains all the same information as a paper prescription – except now it is held in a secure, encrypted, electronic format.
4. The patient will receive an SMS or email containing their initials, a QR code (the token) and some information about the medicine. The QR code can be scanned in a pharmacy to retrieve the electronic prescription from the PDS.

Note: To ensure information is correct within the PDS, it will be important to confirm the patient and carer contact details (mobile phone number and email) kept within the CIS before prescribing medicines. This ensures the correct person receives the token.

CLINICAL WORKFLOW

The clinical workflow for specialists providing electronic prescriptions can be seen below, which also displays the potential benefits at each stage of the process.

Patient consultation

- Supports telehealth consultations, where appropriate, so patients do not need to attend in-person for the sole purpose of a prescription

Specialist prescribes medicine / asks patient if they prefer paper or electronic prescription

- Enables specialists to organise repeat prescriptions without patients attending practice (where appropriate).
- Provides patients with choice (paper or electronic) supporting patient satisfaction.

Specialist uses conformant prescribing software

- Provides opportunity for workflow efficiencies by reducing unnecessary paperwork.
- Less prescription duplications.
- Reduced risk of transcription errors.
- Decreased work needed to create a prescription.
- Supports specialists and practices in going paperless.

Prescribing software sends patient the electronic prescription via SMS or email

- Fewer lost prescriptions and medicine abuse/misuse through better management of medicines.
- Improved medicine compliance by reducing lost prescriptions and providing visibility of unfilled prescriptions.
- Patient privacy is protected by encrypted transmission of medicines information.

Patient collects medicine from the local pharmacy

- Upon receiving SMS or email, patient can take or send it to their preferred pharmacy for the medicine to be dispensed.
- Flexibility and choice when and where to fill prescriptions.
- Avoiding loss of paper prescriptions.

Note: The way in which the clinical information system (CIS) is used may vary slightly, as each system presents options and prompts differently when issuing an electronic prescription. Specific guidance and training should be sought from your software vendor on how to use the electronic prescription service using your CIS.

ELECTRONIC PRESCRIPTIONS USER GUIDE
UPDATED: DECEMBER 2020. PLEASE SOURCE THE MOST UP-TO-DATE VERSION FROM SPECIALIST-TOOLKIT.DIGITALHEALTH.GOV.AU

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The patient journey

When issuing an electronic prescription, an understanding of the patient's end to end journey is useful in providing information and answering questions. The following section is specific to the token.

THE JOURNEY[4]

| STEP 1	**A patient visits their specialist**	A patient visits their specialist, who decides to prescribe based on patient needs. If a medicine is required, the specialist can offer the patient a prescription in paper or electronic format.
STEP 2	**The specialist issues a prescription**	The specialist uses their CIS to generate an electronic prescription and uploads it to the PDS. The electronic prescription is transmitted from the CIS to the PDS in an encrypted format. The CIS generates an SMS or email message containing a token for that medicine (each electronic prescription will be only for one medicine).
STEP 3	**The patient (or agent) receives a token via SMS or email**	The patient or their agent receives an SMS or email message sent through the CIS, containing a QR code (the token). The token may be sent to an agent by the patient to collect medicine on their behalf.
STEP 4	**The patient (or agent) takes the token to a pharmacy with electronic prescription capability**	The patient or their agent takes the token to their pharmacy. They can choose which pharmacy they will collect the medicine from, provided that the pharmacy has conformant dispensing software that can process their electronic prescription. Patients or their agent can use patient medication management apps to organise and assist with providing their token or tokens to their pharmacy.
STEP 5	**The pharmacist dispenses the medicine**	The pharmacist will scan the token, retrieving the electronic prescription from the PDS. The medicine can then be dispensed to the patient or their agent. Information is then recorded in the dispensing software and the medicine cannot be dispensed again using the same token.
STEP 6	**Repeat medicines**	Each token can only be used once. If the prescription has repeats remaining, the dispensing software will automatically generate a new token for the repeat when the medicine is dispensed. The repeat will be sent via SMS or email to the patient.

CASE SCENARIO

Sarah, a 72-year old woman with hypertension and type 2 diabetes, is due for a follow-up review appointment with her cardiologist. Sarah calls the practice to make an appointment and opts to participate in a telehealth consultation, as she lives alone and does not have a car – making travel inconvenient and costly. Sarah has also noticed that electronic prescriptions are now offered, due to updates on the practice website, and would like to receive her prescription electronically. Sarah is glad her practice has made the transition, as she frequently loses her paper prescriptions and experiences physical fatigue when leaving the house for long periods of time. The receptionist then verifies her contact details including her Medicare Number or DVA number and records a preference for electronic prescriptions on her patient file.

During the consultation, the cardiologist decides to change Sarah's medications and discusses prescription options, where Sarah raises a preference for an electronic prescription. The cardiologist knows that one of Sarah's local pharmacies is enabled for electronic prescriptions, as the practice staff regularly contact local pharmacies to check their electronic prescription dispensing capability. The cardiologist sends the token to Sarah via SMS and confirms that the token has been received by Sarah during the consultation, who is glad she does not need to visit specialist to the pick-up the script.

Later on, Sarah contacts the pharmacy by phone to check they have the medication in stock and forwards the SMS with her token so the medication can be dispensed. She pays for the medicine and the pharmacy proceeds to deliver the medication to her at home. In this instance, electronic prescriptions support patient autonomy (e.g. the decision to use telehealth and an electronic prescription), reduces the risk of Sarah losing her prescription and supports her to stay at home and not spend time and money travelling to receive care.
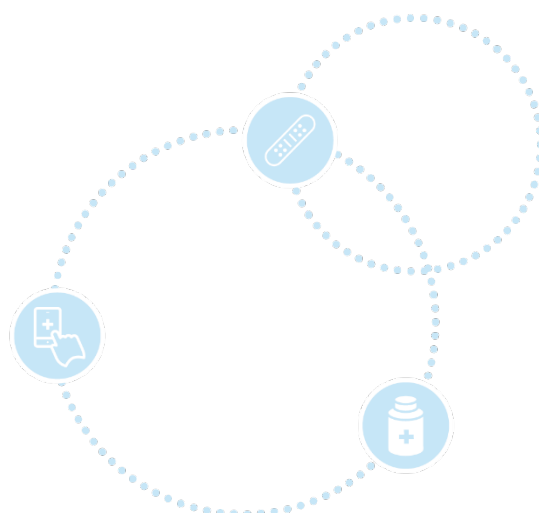
Supporting patients

When a private practice transitions to electronic prescriptions, patients are likely to have a range of questions. The following section provides answers to commonly asked questions and can be shared with specialists and practice staff to support the use of electronic prescriptions. Consider also distributing the Electronic Prescriptions Frequently Asked Questions Sheet.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS FROM PATIENTS[5]

- **Can I still get a paper prescription?** Paper prescriptions are still available to patients – specialists will ask the patient of their preference for a paper or electronic prescription.
- **How do I get my electronic prescription?** When a specialist issues an electronic prescription, patients will receive a SMS or email with a token. Patients then take the token in to or sent to their preferred pharmacy. The pharmacist will scan the token on the patient's phone, which will enable the medicine to be dispensed.
- **What will happen if I do not receive the token?** It is best for patients to confirm they have received the message with the link to the token during their consultation. If not, patients should contact the specialist who can reissue a new token.
- **What do I do if I lose my token or phone?** If the medicine has not been dispensed, patients will need to contact the prescriber to have a token reissued. However, if the medicine is a repeat the pharmacist who dispensed the initial supply can generate a new token for the patient.
- **Can someone take the token to the pharmacy for me?** The token can be forwarded, via SMS or email, to a person of choice (an agent) to take to the pharmacy or the patient can send the token directly to the pharmacy and have the medicine delivered to their home.
- **Are electronic prescriptions secure?** Electronic prescriptions are protected and cannot be accessed by anyone until it is unlocked at the pharmacy when the token is provided.
- **Will I get a separate token for each medicine?** Yes. One token is issued per medicine. Patients with multiple medicines will need an individual token to access each prescription. At the time of prescribing, patients will receive multiple messages. Patient medication management Apps and the ASL offer a solution for patients to better manage their current tokens.
- **How do I know the SMS or email is not a scam?** By checking that patients have received a message with a link to their token before leaving the consultation or finishing the telehealth consultation, patients will know it is from their specialist. Patients should only trust tokens that they are expecting to receive and should contact the practice when in doubt.
- **Can my specialist send the token directly to the pharmacy?** The specialist can only send the token directly to the patient or the patient's agent. The patient or their agent can send it on to the pharmacy.
- **What if I do not have a mobile phone or computer?** If patients cannot receive messages via email or SMS, the message with the link to the token can be sent to their agent or the token could be printed on paper. Alternatively, paper prescriptions are still available to patients.
- **What if I do not have a Medicare card?** If a patient has never been issued a Medicare or DVA card, they may still be eligible for an electronic prescription provided a practitioner's clinical information system can locate their Individual Healthcare Identifier (IHI).

See also the Australian Digital Health Agency's communication toolkit which contains email, social media, website and print materials that can be used to communicate information to patients.

Additional resources

- [Electronic Prescribing for Prescribers Fact Sheet](#) | Australian Digital Health Agency
- [Electronic Prescriptions for Prescribers](#) | Australian Digital Health Agency
- [Electronic Prescribing FAQs](#) | Australian Digital Health Agency
- [Podcast: Electronic Prescriptions- an introduction](#) | Australian Digital Health Agency
- [Electronic Prescribing FAQs – Doctor](#) | eRx Script Exchange
- [Electronic Prescriptions for Prescribers eLearning Module](#) | Australian Digital Health Agency
- [Electronic Prescribing](#) | Australian Government Department of Health
- [Electronic Prescribing](#) | RACGP
- [Electronic Prescribing](#) | Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine
- [Help Centre](#) | Australian Digital Health Agency

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[1] ADHA, '[Electronic Prescriptions – For Prescribers](#)', n.d., accessed 10 September 2020.

[2] ADHA, '[Electronic Prescriptions – For Prescribers](#)', n.d., accessed 10 September 2020.

[3] ADHA, '[Electronic Prescriptions for Prescribers](#)', Enrolment options, n.d., accessed 10 September 2020.

[4] ADHA, '[Electronic Prescriptions for Prescribers](#)', Enrolment options, n.d., accessed 10 September 2020.

[5] ADHA, '[Electronic Prescriptions for Prescribers](#)', Enrolment options, n.d., accessed 10 September 2020.