

Managing Your Medicines

Updated June 2026



In an emergency call **000** for urgent medical help.

If you have concerns about an overdose or suspected poisoning, call the Poisons Information Centre on **13 11 26**

Top tips:

- 1. Find one pharmacy that suits you** using healthdirect's service finder: www.healthdirect.gov.au/australian-health-services. Having one pharmacy means that there is one place that knows you and all your medicines. This means you can:
 - Find out about possible interactions between your medicines.
 - Keep your scripts at the pharmacy so you don't lose them.
 - Ask them to track your spending towards the PBS Safety Net and combine amounts for your family to get cheaper medicines.
 - Ask them if they have an app to help manage your prescriptions and medicine reminders.
- 2. Ask your doctor, pharmacist or read** the Consumer Medicine Information (CMI) to find out:
 - What is the active ingredient?
 - What is the medicine for?
 - What are the benefits?
 - What are the side effects and risks?
 - How long do I need to take it for?
 - How will I know it is working?

You can download the CMI for most medicines at medsinfo.com.au or ask your pharmacist to print it for you.

- 3. Think about getting a medicine review** if you:
 - Are taking more than 5 medicines
 - Have had a major health event (e.g. going to hospital, new diagnosis)
 - Have been going to multiple doctors or pharmacies
 - Are not sure your medicines are working

You can book an appointment with your pharmacy for a MedsCheck at the pharmacy or ask your doctor to refer you for a Home Medicine Review.

4. **Return your expired, unused and unwanted medicines** into your pharmacy for collection and disposal. Find places to recycle empty blister packs at pharmacycle.com.au.
5. **If you have a reaction to your medicine**, you should always seek medical advice from your doctor or call 1800 MEDICARE (**1800 633 422**) for 24/7 advice from a nurse. Call **000** if you have a severe reaction like breathing problems, swelling in your throat, dizziness or chest pains.

You can report an 'adverse event' to the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) to help improve medicine safety. Use the form at: aems.tga.gov.au.



Keeping track of your medicines

It is important to keep track of what you are taking, when you took it and whether you have taken it. There are lots of ways to keep track, including:

- An app recommended by your pharmacy – many have an app where you can order and manage your scripts,
- Getting your pharmacist to put your medicines in a blister pack (e.g. a WebsterPak)
- Using an automatic dispenser like a **Tab Timer** to set reminders and dispense your medicine,
- Using a paper medicine list.



Saving money on medicines

Ask your pharmacist:

- **For generic medicines.** These medicines are cheaper than the brand name medicines but are as effective and safe.
- **If there is a way of taking your medicines that may reduce the cost.** Some medicines can be combined, taken in larger doses or by different routes (e.g. injection compared to tablet). Costs can vary.
- **For a review of your medicines.** You might not need to take all your medicines anymore. Ask for a medicines review (see above).
- **About the PBS (Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme) Safety Net:** Ask your pharmacist to help you track how much you spend for the PBS Safety Net. Once you've spent a certain amount on medicines, you may be entitled to cheaper medicines. You'll be given a card to prove you can buy your medicines more cheaply.

Get more information about the PBS at www.pbs.gov.au or call 1800 020 613.

If your medicine is not on the PBS, you may be able to claim money back on your **private health insurance**. Some community services like Communities@Work have crisis support that can help you with medicine costs.



Electronic prescriptions (e-scripts)

Many doctors are now using **electronic prescriptions** so that you can manage your scripts on your phone or computer. Your doctor will send your script by SMS or email as a link to a QR code. This can be scanned at the pharmacy or added to your pharmacy's app. If you have lots of scripts, ask your pharmacist to set up an **Active Script List**. This lets you doctor send them your scripts automatically so you don't have to keep track.

More information: www.digitalhealth.gov.au/electronic-prescriptions



Buying medicines online

The Internet can be a convenient way to buy medicines or medical devices, but you should be careful buying medical products online. If you get products or devices from overseas, they may not be regulated which means **they may not be safe**.

Talk to your health professional about options that could suit you that are available in Australia. Learn more at www.tga.gov.au/buying-medicines-and-medical-devices-online.



Travelling overseas with your medicines

Some medicines may not be allowed in some countries outside Australia. Before you travel you should:

- Check with the country's embassy, high commission, or consulate if the medicine is legal there.
- If it's legal in the country, get a letter from an Australian doctor for the medicine and take it with you. If you can't do this, print and fill in the **Medicine Export Declaration form**: <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/pb302>. Take it with you when you go through customs.
- Leave the medicine in the original packaging.

Advice on taking your PBS medicine overseas: www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/how-to-manage-your-pbs-medicine-overseas



For more information

Canberra Health Literacy's Hub page on Safe Use of Medicines: cbrhl.org.au/consumers-carers/safe-use-of-medicines/

Learn about safety of complementary and alternative medicines: cbrhl.org.au/consumers-carers/safe-use-of-medicines/alternative-medicines/

Scan for more:



Disclaimer: This resource provides general information that is accurate at the time of publication. It is not professional medical or legal advice.

This work is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0. View a copy of this license at creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/