

Core regulatory and dispensing rules

All prescription medicines can be prescribed for up to a maximum of 12 months' supply

Controlled drugs are excluded from the changes as these are regulated by the Misuse of Drugs Act.

Prescriptions will be legally valid and eligible for funding for 3 months from the date written/issued.

Therefore, the first dispensing must occur within this 3-month period.

The maximum amount that can be dispensed at any one time will be 3 months, or 6 months for oral contraceptives. There are no exceptions for travel, limited physical mobility or relocation.

Prescribers need to be aware that:

Medications on all prescriptions, including those written for quantities less than 12 months may be dispensed for up to 12 months after the date the prescription is written/issued unless stated otherwise.

For example, if a prescription was written on the 1 February 2026, the expiry will be 31 January 2027.

No medication may be legally dispensed 12 months after the date the prescription is issued/written, even as unfunded supply. This means a delay between the prescription being issued and dispensed may result in a reduction in the total quantity of medicine that can be supplied. Therefore, if there is a delay between the prescription being issued/written and dispensed, the final repeat may expire, preventing the patient from receiving the full 12-month supply.

Patients must collect all medications from the same pharmacy where the prescription was initially dispensed. The pharmacy calls the undispensed medication "repeats" and they cannot be transferred between pharmacies.

Regular scripts

If prescribers do not want any repeat supplies dispensed after a certain date or period this needs to be clearly stated on the prescription as otherwise pharmacists COULD, under the new regulation, provide medication for people anytime in the 12 months after the prescription is written.

For example, if a prescriber opts to prescribe a medicine for 6 months' supply to be dispensed within 6 months, then 6/12 should be indicated on the prescription.

This enables the pharmacist to add an expiry date of 6 months vs 12 months.

Examples

Prescription date: 1/02/2026 Rx: Atorvastatin 10mg tablets Sig: 1 tablet daily

Mitte: 12 months

Label: *90 tablets with 3 repeats by 31/01/2027*

Prescription date: 1/02/2026 Rx: Flixonase 50mcg per dose aqueous nasal spray

Sig: 2 sprays into each nostril once daily Mitte: 6 months

Label: *1 nasal spray with 5 repeats by 31/07/2026 (180 days)*

Prescription date: 1/02/2026 Rx: Atorvastatin 10mg tablets Sig: 1 tablet daily

Mitte: 180 tabs

Label: *90 tablets with 1 repeat by 31/01/2027*

Prescription date: 1/02/2026

Rx: Flixonase 50mcg per dose aqueous nasal spray

Sig: 2 sprays into each nostril once daily Mitte: 3 OP

Label: *1 nasal spray with 2 repeats by 31/01/2027*

(Note: Until PMS vendors have changed their systems the writing in GREEN should be added by the prescriber in the “directions” box on the prescription for the pharmacist to translate onto the label.)

PRN medications

It will be unlikely that a medicine will be prescribed PRN for 12 months however, as all prescriptions will be legally valid for 12 months (unless stated otherwise), there may be occasions where a pharmacist will need to use their clinical judgment to determine the appropriate quantity to supply at any one time or contact the prescriber to clarify the intention.

As prescribers it will help if we provide clear information about the quantity to be supplied on each occasion and the expected period of supply (for example, 6 weeks).

Examples

Prescription date: 1/02/2026 Rx: Celecoxib 100mg capsules

Sig: 1 capsule up to BD prn for pain Mitte: 2/12

Label: *60 capsules with 1 repeat by 2/4/2026 (60 days)*

Prescription date: 1/02/2026 Rx: Celecoxib 100mg capsules

Sig: 1 capsule up to BD prn for pain Mitte: 120

Label: 60 capsules with 1 repeat by 31/01/2027

(In this case, the pharmacist will use their clinical judgement and discuss with the patient or the prescriber the intention and length of treatment to allocate a shorter expiry date if appropriate.)

(Note: Until PMS vendors have changed their systems the writing in GREEN should be added by the prescriber in the “directions” box on the prescription for the pharmacist to translate onto the label.)