

# Supporting the safe use of high-risk medicines

## What is SafeScript NSW?

SafeScript NSW is a computer software that allows prescribers (a health practitioner authorised to write prescriptions, e.g. general practitioners (GPs), other medical specialists, dentists and nurse practitioners) and pharmacists to access real-time information about your prescription history for certain medicines with a high risk of harm, known as monitored medicines, such as strong pain relievers (opioids) and anti-anxiety or sleeping aids (benzodiazepines).

Monitored medicines have the potential to cause harm when taken in high doses or taken with other medicines. For this reason, it's important that your prescriber and pharmacist know what monitored medicines you are taking.

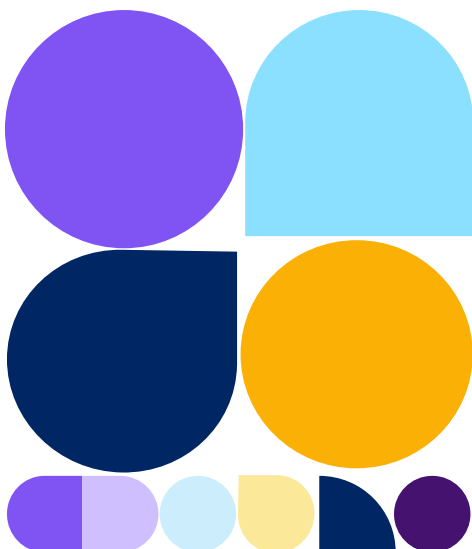
Access to information about your monitored medicine prescriptions through SafeScript NSW helps your prescriber or pharmacist make safer clinical decisions about your care.

## What medicines are monitored by SafeScript NSW?

The SafeScript NSW list of monitored medicines is based on recommendations made by a medical expert panel. These medicines have the potential to cause the most harm. The monitored medicines include:

| Category   | Medicine  |
|--|---|
| Opioids<br>(e.g. strong pain relievers)                | Including but not limited to buprenorphine, codeine, fentanyl, hydromorphone, methadone, morphine, oxycodone, pethidine, tapentadol, tramadol             |
| Benzodiazepines<br>(e.g. tablets for anxiety or sleep) | Including but not limited to alprazolam, flunitrazepam, bromazepam, clobazam, clonazepam, diazepam, lorazepam, midazolam, nitrazepam, oxazepam, temazepam |
| Other sleeping aids                                    | zolpidem, zopiclone   |
| Psychostimulants<br>(e.g. tablets for ADHD)            | dexamfetamine, lisdexamfetamine, methylphenidate  |
| Other monitored medicines                              | ketamine, pregabalin, quetiapine, cannabis based medicines in Schedule 8<br>All other Schedule 8 medicines not listed above                               |

A full list of monitored medicines is included in the [Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Regulation 2008 \(Appendix E\)](#).



## How does SafeScript NSW work?

SafeScript NSW provides your prescriber and pharmacist with access to a history of monitored medicines prescribed and supplied to you.

SafeScript NSW will also issue a notification to your prescriber or pharmacist where an alert has been raised based on your monitored medicines history.

An alert indicates that you may be at risk of harm, and will be triggered when you:

- are taking two or more medicines that when combined may become harmful, for example, certain opioids and benzodiazepines
- are taking high doses of opioids
- have visited multiple prescribers and pharmacies to receive prescriptions for monitored medicines within a short period of time.

## Will SafeScript NSW prevent you from receiving your regular medicines?

No, SafeScript NSW alerts do not instruct your prescriber or pharmacist what to do or whether a medicine should or should not be prescribed or dispensed to you.

This decision remains with your prescriber and pharmacist. They are best placed to consult with you and use their professional judgement to determine whether the medicines prescribed or dispensed remain the safest and best option, based on your health needs and individual circumstances.

## How is your privacy protected?

NSW Health takes the protection of health privacy and personal information seriously. Your privacy is protected and your records are kept secure. Only prescribers and pharmacists involved in your care are legally permitted to view information about you in SafeScript NSW.

There are penalties under the Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Regulation 2008 for unlawfully accessing, using or disclosing information held in SafeScript NSW.

SafeScript NSW records who accesses the system, when they

If you have been receiving monitored medicines or unsafe combinations from more than one prescriber, you could be at risk of harm. With access to this information, your prescriber may talk to you about the medicines you are prescribed or your health care. This could include better coordination of care, safely adjusting your doses or recommending alternative approaches to treatment.

access the system and what they view. This information will be used by NSW Health to monitor access to ensure that it is being used appropriately.

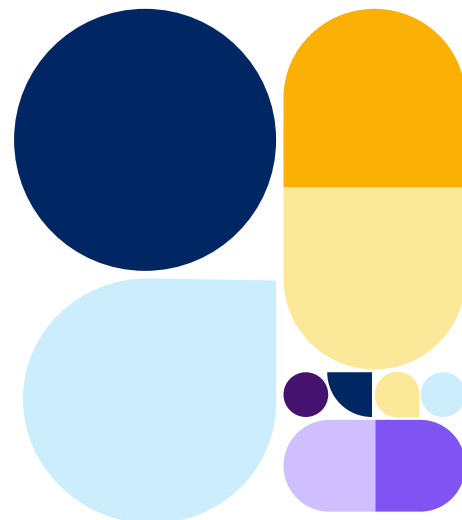
Authorised officers of NSW Health will have access to SafeScript NSW as part of their regulatory role in ensuring the safe supply of medicines in the community.

If you would like to learn more about how SafeScript NSW is holding your information, email [safescript@health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:safescript@health.nsw.gov.au).

## Who can you talk to for support?

If you have any questions about the medicines you are taking, you can contact:

- your GP or pharmacist in the first instance
- [Painaustralia's list of support groups and help lines](#) - find a support group or an online community that helps people living with pain find hope and understanding.
- [Medicines Line](#) - speak to an experienced registered nurse who can answer questions about medication or refer you to a general practitioner, pharmacist or another health professional. Phone 1300 MEDICINE.
- [Alcohol and Drug Information Service \(ADIS\) NSW](#) - a free and confidential helpline staffed by professional counsellors 24/7 for NSW residents with concerns around alcohol and/or drug misuse. Phone 1800 250 015 or web chat available Monday to Friday 8.30am – 5pm.
- [NSW Users and AIDS Association PeerLine](#) - a confidential peer-run telephone service that provides a non-judgmental team of peers who are trained to listen and offer referrals, support and individual advocacy to people who use drugs, who are on the opioid treatment program or who are seeking treatment across NSW. Phone 1800 644 413.





“SafeScript NSW is designed to create better safety around prescribing and dispensing monitored medications. It is intended to keep patients safe and is not meant to prevent supply of these medicines to those who need them.”

**Person with lived experience of chronic pain**

“SafeScript NSW is about having the ability for me and my provider to start a conversation about the risks and benefits of monitored medicines and to discuss the best possible health options available to return to a quality of life that I’m happy with.”

**Person living with mental health issues**



## Where can you get more information about SafeScript NSW?

Further information is available on the SafeScript NSW website: [www.safescript.health.nsw.gov.au](http://www.safescript.health.nsw.gov.au)

## Unsafe use of monitored medicines is a major public health concern



In NSW, more people die from opioid overdoses than road accidents.



In 2019, there were 1,644 unintentional deaths due to overdoses in Australia. Of these, 429 (26%) deaths were due to pharmaceutical opioids.



Benzodiazepines are being increasingly identified in unintentional drug-induced deaths, especially when used in combination with opioids. There were 582 deaths involving benzodiazepines in 2019, accounting for a third (35%) of all unintentional drug-induced deaths.



SafeScript NSW (along with programs like Take Home Naloxone for opioid overdoses and public drug alerts) is part of NSW Health’s commitment to reduce harm from prescribed medications and help save lives in NSW.

Source: [Penington Institute Australia’s Annual Overdose Report 2021](#).