

Dispensing Factsheet: Dispensing prescriptions for Controlled drugs

This factsheet outlines prescription requirements for Controlled drugs (CDs) including prescription validity, length of treatment, owings and additional checks to be carried out when dispensed CDs are collected by patients or their representatives.

CD prescription form requirements

In addition to all standard prescription requirements, prescriptions for Schedule 2 and 3 CDs must also include the following (as outlined in [The Misuse of Drugs Regulations 2001](#)):

- Full name, address and where appropriate, age of patient
- Drug name
- Strength (where appropriate)
- Formulation
- Dose ('as directed' or 'when required' is not permitted)
- Total quantity/dosage units of the preparation **in both words and figures** (for liquids, total volume in ml)
- Date of issue
- Prescriber's address
- Prescriber's signature
 - Please note: the signature can be handwritten or electronic. Advanced electronic signatures are acceptable for Schedule 2 and 3 CDs **where EPS is used**.

In addition:

- For **instalment prescriptions**, specify the instalment amount AND instalment interval
- The words "for dental treatment only", if issued by a **dentist**

Length of treatment

The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) has issued strong recommendations that prescriptions for Schedule 2, 3 and 4 CDs are limited to the quantity necessary for **up to 30 days' treatment**.

Exceptionally, where a prescriber believes that a prescription for a CD should be issued for a longer period, they may do so where there is a genuine clinical need and it does not pose an unacceptable risk to patient safety. Pharmacists can dispense prescriptions ordering more than 30 days' supply of any Schedule 2, 3 and 4 CDs.

Note: For FP10MDA instalment prescriptions, the period of treatment must not exceed 14 days for any drug(s) ordered.

Prescription validity

Prescriptions for Schedule 2, 3 and 4 CDs **must be dispensed within 28 days of the appropriate date** (i.e. date of signing unless the prescriber indicates a date before which the CD should not be dispensed **i.e. start date**). A prescriber may forward-date a CD prescription, in which case the 28-day validity period runs from that date or state date, if indicated.

For EPS prescriptions, pharmacy systems should allow you to send the dispense and submit claim messages after 28 days to claim reimbursement, given there may be scenarios (e.g. technical or internet



outages) where it is not possible to submit a claim within 28 days, even though medicines were supplied in that time. We recommend pharmacy owners to check with their EPS IT system if it enables messages to be sent after 28 days to claim payment.

Prescriptions for Schedule 5 CDs are valid for dispensing for 6 months from the appropriate date. For further information on prescription validity, [click here](#).

All prescriptions for CDs in Schedules 1 –4 of the Misuse of Drugs Act and Regulations must to be supplied as the exact quantity ordered. However, the OPD +/-10% rules can be applied to prescriptions for Schedule 5 CDs, where appropriate. More information on OPD can be found on our [Original Pack Dispensing](#) webpage.

Note: Special container rules **DO NOT** extend to Schedule 2 and 3 CDs. More information on special containers can be found on our [Special containers and products requiring reconstitution](#) webpage.

Dispensing CDs

Owings

In the case of owings, any remaining balance of Schedule 2, 3 or 4 CDs must be dispensed within 28 days of the appropriate date on the prescription. It is good practice for the pharmacist to make the patient or their representative aware from the outset that they will not be able to receive a supply of any prescribed Schedule 2, 3 or 4 CDs beyond the 28 day period of prescription validity.

For prescriptions for Schedule 5 CDs, the balance of an owing cannot be collected more than 6 months after the appropriate date.

Instalment dispensing

For 'blue' FP10MDA instalment prescriptions, the first instalment must be dispensed within 28 days of the appropriate date. The remaining instalments should be dispensed in accordance with the prescriber's instructions specified on the prescription. The prescription must be marked with the date of each supply. The instalment direction is a legal requirement and must be complied with, however, for certain situations (e.g. where a pharmacy is closed on the day an instalment is due for e.g. weekends or Bank holidays), the Home Office has [approved specific wording](#) which provides pharmacists with some flexibility in making supplies outside the stated intervals. **Note: there remains no provision to dispense CDs in instalments on a standard paper FP10 prescription form or via EPS.** Please see our [Dispensing instalment prescriptions](#) factsheet for more information.

Repeat dispensing

Only Schedule 4 and 5 CDs can be prescribed on repeatable prescriptions. Schedule 2 and 3 CDs **cannot** be prescribed on repeat dispensing prescriptions.

Repeat dispensing prescriptions for Schedule 4 CDs must be dispensed for the first time **within 28 days** of the appropriate date.



Repeat prescriptions for Schedule 5 CDs must be dispensed for the first time **within six months** of the appropriate date. After the first dispensing episode is complete for both Schedule 4 and 5 drugs, repeats are legally valid for 12 months from the date signed (in line with normal periods of validity of repeatable prescriptions).

Amending typographical errors on FP10 or FP10MDA paper prescriptions for CDs

Pharmacists are able to amend prescriptions for Schedule 2 and 3 CDs where the prescription does not comply with the CD prescription requirements.

Pharmacists may only correct:

- **minor spelling mistakes**; or
- **minor typographical mistakes** (where the prescriber's intention is still clear); or
- where the total quantity of the CD/number of dosage units is specified in **either words or figures but not both**, a pharmacist can add either the missing words or figures as required (but not both).

In doing this, the pharmacist must exercise due diligence and be satisfied that the prescription is genuine, and the CD is being supplied in accordance with the prescriber's intentions.

The prescription must be amended in ink or otherwise indelibly. The pharmacist must mark the prescription so that the amendment is attributable to them (e.g. name, date, signature, and GPhC registration number).

If there is more than one amendment on the same prescription, each amendment must be countersigned. Where an amendment is made by one pharmacist and another pharmacist makes the supply, the Home Office has advised that the second pharmacist should also mark the amendment to indicate that they are also satisfied and it is attributable to them as well.

Collection of CD prescriptions

Identity checks

When a Schedule 2 CD is collected from a pharmacy, legislation states that the **pharmacist must ascertain whether the person collecting is the patient, patient's representative or a healthcare professional**.

In the case of Schedule 2 CD prescriptions, the person may be asked to present some form of identification for example, if they are not known to the pharmacist. If the person collecting the prescription is a healthcare professional acting in their professional capacity on behalf of the patient, the pharmacist must ask for identification and obtain evidence of the name, address and professional registration number of the healthcare professional.

Information relating to the identity of the person collecting a Schedule 2 CD must be recorded in the CD register. For more information on record-keeping requirements see our [Dispensing Controlled drugs](#) guidance.

Prescription charges

If a patient pays for their prescriptions, they would only need to pay one prescription charge for each chargeable item dispensed.



For supplies made against FP10MDA instalment prescriptions, patients **DO NOT** pay a charge for each instalment of the same drug dispensed. Only one prescription charge is payable for the same drug dispensed in instalments on a FP10MDA form. However, if **two different drugs** (for example, methadone and diazepam) or **a drug with two different formulations** (for example, buprenorphine sublingual and buprenorphine oral lyophilisate) are ordered on the same instalment prescription form, a patient would pay **two prescription charges**.

Completing the reverse of the NHS prescription form

The reverse of the FP10 (or FP10MDA) paper prescription form or EPS token should be completed in full with the patient's declaration of payment or exemption status and their signature. A patient's representative may sign on behalf of the patient.

The patient or patient's representative should also be advised to complete the 'Signature of collector of Schedule 2 & 3 CDs' box on the reverse of the prescription form or EPS token. Where the person collecting the CDs refuses to provide their details (e.g. the name to record in the PMR/CD register), pharmacists may apply their discretion on whether or not to supply the CDs.

Record keeping requirements

A CD register (CDR) must be used to record details of any Schedule 1 and Schedule 2 CDs received or supplied by a registered pharmacy. The following information must be recorded in the CDR when CDs are supplied (as outlined in [The Misuse of Drugs Regulations 2001](#)) under the following specific headings:

- Date supplied
- Name and address of person or firm supplied
- Details of authority to possess –prescriber or license holder details
- Quantity supplied
- Details of the person collecting the medicines:
 - Whether the person who collected the drug was the patient, the patient's representative or a healthcare professional acting on behalf of the patient
 - If the person who collected the drug was a healthcare professional acting on behalf of the patient, record that person's name and address;
 - If the person who collected the drug was the patient or the patient's representative, record whether evidence of identity was requested of that person (yes/no); and whether evidence of identity was provided by the person collecting the drug (yes/no).

Related links

- [Dispensing Controlled Drugs](#)
- [Prescription form validity](#)
- [EPS and Controlled Drugs](#)
- [Briefing: EPS Controlled Drugs \(CD\) FAQs](#)
- [Original Pack Dispensing](#)



Appendix 1: Summary of rules for different CD Schedules

	Schedule 2 CD	Schedule 3 CD	Schedule 4 CD	Schedule 5 CD
Length of treatment*	Up to 30 days (as recommended by DHSC)	Up to 30 days (as recommended by DHSC)	Up to 30 days (as recommended by DHSC)	As per prescriber's discretion
Prescription requirements	Yes	Yes	No	No
Prescription validity (from the appropriate date)	28 days	28 days	28 days	6 months
Within scope of OPD +/-10% rules	No	No	No	Yes
Eligible for repeat dispensing	No	No	Yes	Yes
Record keeping requirements	Yes	No	No	No

*Note: For FP10MDA instalment prescriptions, the period of treatment must not exceed 14 days for any drug(s) ordered.