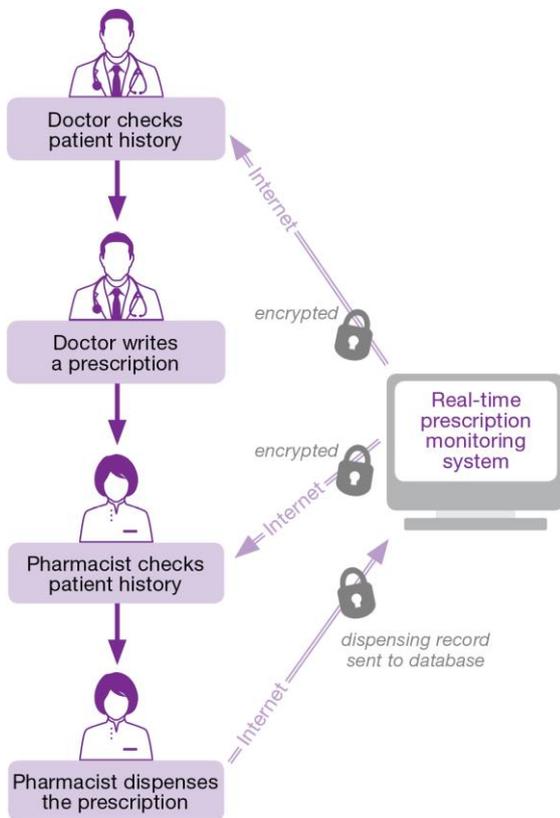


Real-time prescription monitoring

Frequently Asked Questions – for patients

Q: What is a real-time prescription monitoring system?

A: A real-time prescription monitoring system is computer software that allows pharmacy dispensing records for certain medicines to be transmitted in real-time to a centralised database which can then be accessed by doctors and pharmacists during a consultation.



Q: Why is real-time prescription monitoring being implemented?

A: The misuse of prescription medicines and the increasing number of deaths associated with prescription shopping, where patients visit multiple doctors to obtain prescription medicines in excess of medical need without each doctor knowing that the patient had attended other doctors, are a major public health concern.

In 2016, there were 372 Victorian drug overdose deaths involving pharmaceutical medicines, higher than the number of overdose deaths involving illicit drugs (257), and higher than the road toll (291).

Real-time prescription monitoring will provide doctors and pharmacists with a clinical tool to help make safer clinical decisions, stop patients who are prescription shopping, and facilitate the early identification and referral of patients who are developing signs of addiction to counselling and more appropriate treatment.

Q: What medicines will be included in the system?

A: Based on the latest international and local research and recommendations from the project expert advisory group, the system will monitor prescription medicines that are causing the greatest harm to the Victorian community.

These include all Schedule 8 medicines, such as oxycodone (brand names include OxyContin and Endone), morphine (brand names include Kapanol), alprazolam (brand names include Xanax and Kalma), methylphenidate (brand names include Ritalin) and dexamphetamine.

Other medicines to be monitored include all benzodiazepines such as diazepam (brand names include Valium), 'Z-drugs' such as zolpidem (brand names include Stilnox), as well as quetiapine (brand names include Seroquel).

Codeine will also be monitored, but it will be included at a later stage. This will allow time to adjust to the rescheduling of over the counter codeine products to prescription only by the Therapeutic Goods Administration from February 2018.

Q: What information is recorded in the system?

A: Existing information which is already provided by doctors and recorded by pharmacies when a prescription is written and dispensed will be recorded in the real-time prescription monitoring system. These include: patient name, address, details of medicines

supplied (name, strength and quantity), and doctor and pharmacy details.

Q: Who will have access to the system?

A: Doctors and pharmacists directly involved in your care will have access to view information relating to your prescription medicines when they are considering the prescribing or supply of a medicine.

Authorised Department of Health and Human Services staff may also view information in order to ensure the safe supply of medicines in the community and to facilitate the co-ordination of treatment when other health professionals are involved in your care.

Q: Will this system prevent me from receiving my regular medicines?

A: The real-time prescription monitoring system is an additional clinical decision-making tool for doctors and pharmacists to ensure that you are continuing to receive the safest and most appropriate medical care. For your safety, it is important for doctors and pharmacists to know all dispensing events for these high risk medicines, regardless of which doctor prescribed them or which pharmacy dispensed them.

Most patients who visit the same doctor and pharmacy for prescription medicines will likely experience no change to their prescription medicines.

However, if you have been receiving the same prescription medicines from more than one doctor without each doctor knowing about the other, your doctor or pharmacist may consider some changes for your safety and to ensure you continue to receive the most appropriate medical care.

Q: How will my privacy be protected?

A: In Victoria, anyone who wishes to access your health record must adhere to the requirements under the *Health Records Act 2001*. There are strict penalties for not complying with this legislation.

Only doctors and pharmacists who are involved in your care, as well as authorised Department of Health and Human Services staff will be permitted under law to view information in the system about you.

The viewing of a record will be logged on each occasion and will be monitored by the Department of Health and Human Services. If inappropriate use is detected, penalties may be incurred under Victorian law and the matter may be referred to the Medical or Pharmacy Board for further investigation and possible disciplinary action.

Q: Can I opt-out of the system?

A: No, the system is not opt-out.

Currently, when a prescription medicine is supplied, the law already requires pharmacists to record the details of the prescription. The law will now also require these records to be provided into the real-time prescription monitoring system.

The collection of prescription records from all pharmacies is necessary to provide doctors and pharmacists with access to a complete record of supply to ensure patients do not receive more medicines than is medically necessary.

Q: Is the real-time prescription monitoring system the same as the myHealth Record?

A: No, real-time prescription monitoring and the myHealth Record are not the same.

The myHealth Record is a patient-controlled summary of your health record, in which you can choose what is included and who can view your medication history.

As it is important for your safety that doctors and pharmacists involved in your care have a complete record of high risk medicines that have been supplied to you, real-time prescription monitoring will not be an opt-out system.

Real-time prescription monitoring will be a system independent of the myHealth Record.

Q: When will the system commence?

A: Real-time prescription monitoring is a priority project for the Victorian Government. While work towards implementation will proceed as fast as possible, we are also taking the necessary steps to ensure the system is implemented in the most effective way.

The system is scheduled to be rolled out in phases commencing in 2018.

Q: Where can I get further information?

A: Further information is available on the Department of Health and Human Services website, or click [here](#).

The Real-Time Prescription Monitoring Implementation team can be contacted on 9096 5633 or via email rtpm@dhhs.vic.gov.au.

If you or someone you care about has a problem with prescription medicines, alcohol or other drugs, DirectLine may assist with counselling, information and referral to specialist treatment services.

DirectLine is Victoria's free and confidential 24-hour telephone counselling service: 1800 888 236