

Rescheduling of codeine

February 2018

Description

From 1 February 2018, medicines that contain low-dose codeine will no longer be available without prescription in pharmacies. A consultation with a doctor will be the only way for people to obtain codeine-containing medicines after this time. It is unclear how many people will present to medical practitioners to obtain codeine-containing medicines.

Background

The decision made to change the schedule of codeine to Prescription Only (S4) was based on research showing that over-the-counter doses of codeine offer very little additional benefits when compared to medicines without codeine. However, codeine is associated with higher health risks, such as tolerance, dependence or addiction and even accidental or intentional poisoning/overdose.

For more information on these changes see:

TGA Codeine Information Hub: <https://www.tga.gov.au/codeine-info-hub>

NPS MedicineWise: <https://www.nps.org.au/medical-info/clinical-topics/over-the-counter-codeine-changes-to-supply>

Who is affected?

Community Members

If you take codeine regularly or even occasionally, it is important that you talk to your General Practitioner or pharmacist about your options and to work out what is best for you. There are several alternative ways of managing acute and chronic pain, both with and without medicines, and your health professionals will be able to advise you on your options.

For more information:

PainAustralia: <http://www.painaustralia.org.au/static/uploads/files/painaustralia-codiene-fact-sheet-october-2017-wfxosgjjccah.pdf>

NPS MedicineWise: <https://www.nps.org.au/medical-info/consumer-info/medicines-with-codeine-what-you-need-to-know>

Script Wise: http://www.scriptwise.org.au/codeine/community_toolkit/

SA Health & DASSA: [Information for Consumers Having Difficulty Ceasing Their Over The Counter Codeine Medications](#)

General Practitioners

As General Practitioners will be the only option to obtain codeine-containing medicines, they will need to undertake an assessment of anyone presenting and decide on the most appropriate course of action. This may include evidence-based holistic pain management options, mental health or dependence treatment options, or prescriptions for codeine-containing or other medicines.

For more information:

DASSA guidance: [Factsheet for GPs](#)

[Managing Patients with Regular OTC Codeine Use](#)

HealthPathways South Australia: *TBC 2018*

RACGP: <https://www.racgp.org.au/yourracgp/news/media-releases/changes-to-codeine-rescheduling-carries-health-risks/>

TGA: <https://www.tga.gov.au/tips-talking-about-codeine-guidance-health-professionals-prescribing-authority>

Script Wise: <http://www.scriptwise.org.au/codeine/prescriber-toolkit/>

Pharmacists

It will be important that pharmacists respond to requests for codeine-containing medicines appropriately after this time and provide recommendations based on the needs of the person.

People presenting with acute pain, coughs or colds may be able to access alternative over-the-counter medicines.

Pharmacists will also need to provide advice on continued safe use of codeine-containing medicines to anyone who presents with a prescription for them. Some of these medicines may not be covered by the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, and so people should be advised accordingly.

For more information:

DASSA guidance: [factsheet](#)

TGA: <https://www.tga.gov.au/behind-news/pharmacist-fact-sheet-talking-your-patients-about-changes-codeine-access>

Pharmaceutical Society of Australia: <http://www.psa.org.au/codeine/support-resources>

Script Wise: <http://www.scriptwise.org.au/codeine/pharmacist-toolkit>

Dentists

As dentists can prescribe codeine-containing medicines, it is important that they are familiar with the changes and understand the options for analgesia and potential actions to refer inappropriate requests for codeine-containing medicines.

For more information:

[Australian Dental Association \(ADA\)](#)

Allied Health

Sometimes allied health professionals may recommend a person to seek advice about medicines for pain or other conditions. Allied health will need to understand over-the-counter options for analgesia and that codeine-containing medicines are only available on prescription.

Education sessions & other events

Education events are being held across Adelaide to support GPs and health professionals with understanding these changes. Events are scheduled for December and early in the 2018 year – information about these events will be released shortly. Please keep an eye out on the [Adelaide PHN](#), [SAPMEA](#), [NHN](#), and [DASSA](#) websites.

Webinars

The TGA have recently hosted a national series of workshops on the up-scheduling of codeine. These sessions provided attendees the opportunity to engage with senior TGA representatives, as well as leading specialists in acute and chronic pain management and addiction. Video links from the Melbourne session can be accessed [here](#).

NPS Medicinewise Professional have recently released a podcast with Dr David Liew interviewing clinical pharmacologist Darren Roberts about why codeine is being rescheduled and what the implications are. Access the podcast [here](#).