

Emergency supply of medicines

Emergency supply requested by member of the public

Pharmacists are sometimes called upon by members of the public to make an emergency supply of medicines. The Human Medicines Regulations 2012 allows exemptions from the Prescription Only requirements for emergency supply to be made by a person lawfully conducting a retail pharmacy business provided:

- a) that the pharmacist has interviewed the person requesting the prescription-only medicine and is satisfied:
 - i) that there is immediate need for the prescription-only medicine and that it is impracticable in the circumstances to obtain a prescription without undue delay;
 - ii) that treatment with the prescription-only medicine has on a previous occasion been prescribed for the person requesting it;
 - iii) as to the dose that it would be appropriate for the person to take;
- b) that no greater quantity shall be supplied than will provide 5 days' treatment of phenobarbital p. 223, *phenobarbital sodium*, or Controlled Drugs in Schedules 4 or 5 (doctors or dentists from the European Economic Area and Switzerland, or their patients, cannot request an emergency supply of Controlled Drugs in Schedules 1, 2, or 3, or drugs that do not have a UK marketing authorisation) or 30 days' treatment for other prescription-only medicines, except when the prescription-only medicine is:
 - i) insulin, an ointment or cream, or a preparation for the relief of asthma in an aerosol dispenser when the smallest pack can be supplied;
 - ii) an oral contraceptive when a full cycle may be supplied;
 - iii) an antibiotic in liquid form for oral administration when the smallest quantity that will provide a full course of treatment can be supplied;
- c) that an entry shall be made by the pharmacist in the prescription book stating:
 - i) the date of supply;
 - ii) the name, quantity and, where appropriate, the pharmaceutical form and strength;
 - iii) the name and address of the patient;
 - iv) the nature of the emergency;
- d) that the container or package must be labelled to show:
 - i) the date of supply;
 - ii) the name, quantity and, where appropriate, the pharmaceutical form and strength;
 - iii) the name of the patient;
 - iv) the name and address of the pharmacy;
 - v) the words 'Emergency supply';
 - vi) the words 'Keep out of the reach of children' (or similar warning);
- e) that the prescription-only medicine is not a substance specifically excluded from the emergency supply provision, and does not contain a Controlled Drug specified in Schedules 1, 2, or 3 to the Misuse of Drugs Regulations 2001 except for phenobarbital p. 223 or *phenobarbital sodium* for the treatment of epilepsy: for details see *Medicines, Ethics and Practice*, London, Pharmaceutical Press (always consult latest edition). Doctors or dentists from the European Economic Area and Switzerland, or their patients, cannot request an emergency supply of Controlled Drugs in Schedules 1, 2, or 3, or drugs that do not have a UK marketing authorisation.

Emergency supply requested by prescriber

Emergency supply of a prescription-only medicine may also be made at the request of a doctor, a dentist, a supplementary prescriber, a community practitioner nurse prescriber, a nurse, pharmacist, or optometrist independent prescriber, or a doctor or dentist from the European Economic Area or Switzerland, provided:

- a) that the pharmacist is satisfied that the prescriber by reason of some emergency is unable to furnish a prescription immediately;
- b) that the prescriber has undertaken to furnish a prescription within 72 hours;
- c) that the medicine is supplied in accordance with the directions of the prescriber requesting it;
- d) that the medicine is not a Controlled Drug specified in Schedules 1, 2, or 3 to the Misuse of Drugs Regulations 2001 except for phenobarbital p. 223 or *phenobarbital sodium* for the treatment of epilepsy: for details see *Medicines, Ethics and Practice*, London, Pharmaceutical Press (always consult latest edition); (Doctors or dentists from the European Economic Area and Switzerland, or their patients, cannot request an emergency supply of Controlled Drugs in Schedules 1, 2, or 3, or drugs that do not have a UK marketing authorisation).
- e) that an entry shall be made in the prescription book stating:
 - i) the date of supply;
 - ii) the name, quantity and, where appropriate, the pharmaceutical form and strength;
 - iii) the name and address of the practitioner requesting the emergency supply;
 - iv) the name and address of the patient;
 - v) the date on the prescription;
 - vi) when the prescription is received the entry should be amended to include the date on which it is received.

Royal Pharmaceutical Society's guidelines

1. The pharmacist should consider the medical consequences of not supplying a medicine in an emergency.
2. If the pharmacist is unable to make an emergency supply of a medicine the pharmacist should advise the patient how to obtain essential medical care.

For conditions that apply to supplies made at the request of a patient see *Medicines, Ethics and Practice*, London, Pharmaceutical Press, (always consult latest edition).