

read and sign it. The exception is a prescription for a Schedule II drug, which must be written by the prescriber.

Verbal Orders

When a prescriber has the health-care professional write the prescription, these instructions are **verbal orders**. For example, a physician may not be present, so the order is given over the telephone. Check with your supervisor to see whether you are allowed to take a verbal order. If so, write words and numbers carefully, and be sure to read what you have written back to the prescriber to ensure that the information is correct. Some offices require that the prescriber also repeat the information back to you. In rare instances, a physician may give a verbal order during an emergency situation. This is known as a **STAT** order, meaning to give immediately. This should be the only instance in which you give a patient a medication without a written order when the prescriber is present. If the situation is not an emergency, you should write the order, and have the prescriber sign it before the medication is administered or dispensed. In all instances, the prescriber must sign the order as soon as possible. Again, this procedure legally protects the health-care worker from discrepancies between what the prescriber intended and what was administered. Verbal orders are not permitted for Schedule II drugs unless it is an emergency and meets specific criteria. Those criteria include the following:

- The quantity prescribed and dispensed is limited to the amount required for the emergency period.
- The pharmacist will immediately write the prescription, which will contain all information required except for the signature of the prescribing individual.
- The pharmacist will make a reasonable effort to determine that the oral authorization legitimately came from the prescribing individual.
- Within 7 days of authorizing an emergency oral prescription, the prescribing individual will have a written prescription for the emergency quantity prescribed and delivered to the dispensing pharmacist including “Authorization for Emergency Dispensing” and the date of the oral order listed on the prescription.

Electronic Prescription Orders

A newer type of medication order is the **electronic prescription** (e-prescription). The prescriber creates the prescription electronically and sends it directly to the patient’s pharmacy. In many instances, the electronic prescribing network used by the medical insurance companies and pharmacies can immediately verify insurance coverage for medications. Some electronic prescribing network programs manage the patient’s medication history, to identify any medication interactions or other problems before the patient receives the ordered medication. E-prescriptions bypass the typical problems of written prescriptions, such as illegible writing, loss of the written document, and missing information on the prescription.

A CLOSER LOOK 5.1: Internet Pharmacies

With the soaring cost of prescription medication in the United States and the high numbers of Americans without medical insurance, many people are turning to Internet pharmacies. Many legitimate Canadian companies take a written prescription and fill it with lower-cost Canadian medications.

Standing Orders

A prescriber may leave a list of **standing orders** to be used in specific routine circumstances. For example, before a diagnostic test, a prescriber may require the patient to have nothing by mouth (NPO) after midnight, have an enema, follow with a clear liquid diet, and take an antibiotic. It is important to verify