Advice to Members

Preparing prescriptions for scheduled ocular medicines

February 2017
Optometrists with therapeutic endorsement are able to write prescriptions for topical ocular therapeutics. Prescriptions may be written by hand or generated through practice management software.

The cost of some formulations of ocular medicines, for eligible patients with indicated conditions, is subsidised through the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme. This information is listed under the Optometrical Items.

Personalised computer forms and pads are available for optometrists to use when writing prescriptions, and can be ordered online. Optometry Australia recommends that optometrists use the PBS stationery when writing prescriptions for ocular medication.

If the prescription is for a formulation or a patient not eligible for PBS subsidy, you can mark that script as a private script.

A PBS prescription by an optometrist:

- must be written in indelible form (i.e., ink or ball-point pen) in the prescriber's own handwriting (exceptions must be approved by Chief Executive Medicare) either on the standard PBS prescription, or on paper approximately 18 cm x 12 cm, or they can be generated by computer on a form approved by the Department of Human Services. The prescription should be provided to the patient in duplicate, as both parts make up a valid PBS prescription, and both are to be given to the pharmacist. Both the original and the duplicate must be legible;
- must record the optometrist's name, address and prescriber number; the patient's name, address and entitlement status, and whether the prescription is under the PBS or RPBS (the PBS prescription must be for the treatment of the person named on the PBS prescription); (for private prescriptions, ‘PBS/RPBS’ should be crossed out and the prescription clearly marked ‘non-PBS’)
- should completely identify the pharmaceutical benefit by detailing the item, dose, form, strength, quantity and instructions for use;
- should indicate where brand substitution is not permitted. PBS prescriptions must not be prepared using a computer prescribing program that contains a default which would result in all prescriptions being indicated as Brand Substitution Not Permitted;
- must be signed by the prescriber and dated. Forward or back dating is not permitted;
- cannot be written more than once a day for the same pharmaceutical benefit for the same person;
- can include only one pharmaceutical benefit item; additional items must be written on individual forms;
- must not include a non-pharmaceutical benefit item on the same form as the pharmaceutical benefit item;
- must only prescribe administration of an item in its particular manner of administration e.g. a topical ophthalmic preparation may not be prescribed for systemic use;
- may include repeats (see https://www.pbs.gov.au/browse/Optometrical).
A Practice Note on optometry streamlined authority prescribing under the PBS is available at http://www.optometry.org.au/for-optometrists/professional-practice/practice-notes/ (login required).

Optometrists must include details of any medications they prescribe on the patient record.

Optometrists must ensure that prescriptions written under the PBS fall within the limits of their prescribing approval under State or Territory requirements. It is the optometrist's responsibility to ensure that PBS prescriptions comply with all aspects of their prescriber approval.

Optometry Australia recommends that optometrists use PBS stationery when writing prescriptions for ocular medication. Personalised computer prescription forms and personalised prescription books that include the optometrist's name, qualifications, practice address/es, telephone number and prescriber number are available from the Department of Human Services. These forms and pads should not be used by other prescribers. These forms can be used to prescribe authority-required PBS/RPBS items.

The optometrist should advise the patient whether the prescription does or does not entitle them to subsidy under the PBS. Optometrists should be aware of the medications that would be available at a subsidised price if prescribed by a medical practitioner. In cases where a subsidy can only be obtained via a medical practitioner's prescription, it may be appropriate to inform and refer the patient, especially where there is a significant difference between the private and PBS cost.

With the exception of Tasmania, the therapeutic drugs able to be used by endorsed optometrists in the states and territories of Australia are those included in the Optometry Board of Australia National List. The list for Tasmania is available at http://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/psbtas/guidelines.

**Forms**


- Application for approval to prescribe medication under the Pharmaceutical Benefit Scheme (PBS) as an authorised optometrist form (PB152)
- Order for PBS/RPBS personalised computer prescription forms for Optometrists form (PB030)
- Order for PBS/RPBS personalised prescription books for Optometrists form (PB028).

**References**