



Procedure

Administration of medications in schools procedure

Version: 6.0 | **Version effective:** 00/00/2021

Audience

All state schools

Purpose

This procedure provides the process for administering medications to students when they are attending school or school-related activities, in accordance with the advice of the student's prescribing health practitioner or as an emergency first aid response. Having clear processes and procedures in place to manage the administration of medications facilitates students' safety and meets legislative obligations.

Overview

The administration of medications to students is only to occur when necessary during school hours or school-related activities; and when there is either medical authorisation for its administration or it is required as an emergency first aid response.

The procedure does not apply to pre-preparatory programs and/or outside school hours care service operated on the school site. These services deal with medications in accordance with the service's policies and procedures which would reflect [legislation](#) that applies to that service.

Responsibilities

Principals/delegates

- have processes in place to ensure staff safely administer medically authorised medication to students in accordance with all instructions (e.g. pharmacy label/medication order/Action Plan/school processes) and the [Restrictive practices](#) procedure
- establish approval processes for students who self-administer their medication
- have processes in place to ensure staff safely receive, store and dispose of students' medication
- ensure staff are appropriately trained in the administration of medications

- ensure documentation, recording and reporting processes are met in relation to the administration of medications
- ensure emergencies requiring the administration of medication are responded to appropriately
- communicate relevant requirements about medication management appropriately to parents/carers.

School staff

- safely receive, store and dispose of students' medication
- safely administer medically authorised medication to students
- assist a student requiring emergency first aid medication
- accurately record the administration of medication
- notify the principal/delegate if there is a medication administration error, or if medication is stolen, misused or diverted from the person to whom it was prescribed.

Parents/carers/students

- provide information to the principal/delegate about the student's health condition/s, including written information from qualified health practitioners, at enrolment or on diagnosis, and provide updated information when any information changes
- complete the required forms when medically authorised medication is to be administered to a student
- ensure that enough well maintained equipment, in-date medication and consumables, labelled clearly with the student's name, are supplied
- collect unused medication from the school when it is no longer required or has expired
- discuss with the school administration if the student may be able to be responsible for self-administration of their medication.

Process



Figure 1 Process of administering medication in schools

1. Prepare

1. General preparation occurs to support students who need medication

- Principal/delegate and staff consider completing relevant topics of the Administration of medication in schools (AMS) online training course available on the [Learning Place](#).
- Principal/delegate and staff refer to the [Guidelines for the administration of medications in schools](#) for information on best practice.
- Principal/delegate considers the schools local context and:
 - sets up processes to receive, store and dispose of medications

- determines suitable processes for the safe administration of medication (refer to the [Guidelines Appendix 2: 7 RIGHTS of safe medication administration in schools](#)).
- Principal/delegate provides relevant information to staff and parents/carers (refer to the [Process for principals: Communicating information about the administration of medications](#)).
- Staff are familiar with the process to safely administer medications in schools and safely handle and dispose of medication (refer to the [Guidelines Appendix 2: 7 RIGHTS of safe medication administration in schools](#)).
- Principal/delegate communicates to staff how the school will respond to incidents involving medication side effects and errors (refer to the [Health Safety and Wellbeing Incident Management Guideline and the Guidelines Appendix 5: Responding to medication side effects, errors and incidents](#)).

2. Preparation occurs for students who need medication

- Principal/delegate ensures they are aware of all students who require medication to be administered at school or during school-related activities.
- Principal/delegate ensures staff are provided with appropriate training (refer to the [Process for principals: Staff training in the administration of medications](#)).
- Principal/delegate ensures all staff, including relief teachers, are advised of the medication requirements of the students they supervise, including being informed of: when medication is required, including specific warning signs, triggers or emergency responses (as outlined in a student's health plan); where medication is stored; and who will administer it.

2. Receive

1. When student medication is brought to school

- Staff ensure the required forms have been completed and signed (refer to the [Guidelines Table 2: Forms for administering medication at school](#)).
- Staff review the medication and dosage information on the consent form and/or medication order and check that it matches the pharmacy label instructions (NOTE: often the pharmacy label is not able to be seen on insulin, so check the medication order carefully).
- For 'as-needed' medication, staff ensure parent/carer contact details are accurate as they may need to be contacted immediately prior to any administration.
- Staff ensure there is medical authorisation e.g. there is a pharmacy label attached to the original container with the prescribing health practitioner's name, or a medication order, or written instructions or Action Plan from the prescribing health practitioner.
- Staff attach all required forms (e.g. consent form, medication order, written instructions, action plan) to the relevant record form:
 - [Record of medication administration \(routine medication\)](#)
 - [Record of medication administration \('as-needed' medication\)](#)
 - [Record of medication administration \(insulin\)](#).

- If the pharmacy label is the only form of medical authorisation and the prescribing health practitioner's name is not listed, staff contact the pharmacy identified on the label to confirm the medication has been prescribed. DO NOT administer the student's medication until confirmation is received.
- If the pharmacy label is the only form of medical authorisation and the instructions on the pharmacy label are not legible or easily understood, staff contact the pharmacy identified on the label to seek clarification. DO NOT administer the student's medication until clarification is received.
- If the information on the pharmacy label contradicts the information on the consent form or the medication order/Action Plan, staff seek clarification from the parent/carer or the prescribing health practitioner. DO NOT administer the student's medication until clarification is received.

2. If the medication is for a student to self-administer

- Staff will refer to the [Guidelines](#) (Appendix 3: Approval requirements for self-administration) to determine if principal/delegate approval is required.
- If principal/delegate approval is required:
 - the principal/delegate will:
 - refer to the [Guidelines](#) (Appendix 4: Risk assessment for determining self-administration) and, in consultation with the parent/carer/student and student's health team, consider the factors and risks involved in safe self-administration of medication;
 - approve student to be responsible for possession and self-administration of medication when it is considered that the student can confidently and competently undertake safe self-administration of medication at school;
 - record any discussions with the parent/carer and student in OneSchool as a Record of Contact;
 - ensure relevant staff are aware of students who are self-administering and self-managing their medications; and
 - notify staff that they should be trained and prepared to administer emergency medication to the student as a first aid response if required.
 - Staff, as designated by the principal, will:
 - record the decision to allow the student to self-administer in OneSchool > under the Manage Student Details > edit Medical Conditions > add a comment in the Management field (e.g. student self-administers insulin as required). Once entered, this information should be visible in the Student Profile Additional Information section;
 - be familiar with the signs that the student is experiencing/about to experience an emergency health event; and
 - be trained and prepared to administer the student's emergency medication to the student as a first aid response if required.
- If principal/delegate approval is not required (i.e. for self-administration of asthma medication):
 - the parent/carer/student will advise the school administration that they allow the student to be responsible for self-administration of their asthma medication
 - the principal/delegate will:

- note those students who are self-administering asthma medication;
 - notify staff that they should be prepared to administer asthma medication to the student as a first aid response if the student's symptoms compromises their ability to self-administer it;
 - consult with parent/carer/student if the decision for the student to self-administer their own asthma medication needs to be overturned due to health or safety issues and explain the reasons why;
 - overturn the parent/carer/student decision if health or safety risks cannot be controlled or minimised effectively; and
 - if self-administration is overturned, ensure processes for staff administration of medication to the student are undertaken.
- Staff, as designated by the principal/delegate, will:
- record the advice in the student's OneSchool medical records by selecting Student details ? Medical > Edit > Add new Medical Condition Details > select 'Asthma – student self-administers (No Action Plan required. School will administer Asthma First Aid in an emergency)';
 - be familiar with the signs that the student is experiencing/about to experience an emergency health event; and
 - be trained and prepared to administer the student's emergency medication to the student as a first aid response if required.

3. Once all documentation has been reviewed, staff:

- provide information to the principal/delegate about the student requiring medication to allow principal/delegate to determine school processes (e.g. staff to be involved, storage of medication, supervision);
- [communicate relevant information about the administration of medications](#); and
- ensure [relevant training is completed](#).

3. Administer

1. When medication is required as a non-emergency response or routine administration

- Staff will:
 - observe standard precautions for [infection control](#) relevant to administering medications; and
 - follow school processes (that have been developed with reference to the [Guidelines](#) Appendix 2: 7 RIGHTS of safe medication administration in schools).

2. When medication is required as part of an emergency response:

- Staff will either:
 - follow the student's Emergency Health Plan or Action Plan and any other written instructions from the prescribing health practitioner regarding the administration of the student's medication; or
 - administer emergency first aid medication as a first aid response e.g. asthma/anaphylactic reaction.
- Staff will:
 - administer medication in accordance with relevant training or instructions;

- if required, immediately phone emergency services (000), request ambulance services, stay on the phone and follow the advice given; and
- follow the relevant incident management actions and timeframes in the [Health Safety and Wellbeing Incident Management Guideline](#).

4. After administration of medication

1. After administering medication as an emergency response

- Staff will:
 - if the student's medication has been administered as per their Emergency Health Plan or Action Plan, record information on the [Record of administration of medication at school \('as-needed' medication\)](#); or
 - if the school's emergency first aid medication is administered (e.g. to an undiagnosed student), record the incident as per [Recording first aid](#) in the [Managing first aid in the workplace](#) procedure e.g. using the [MyHR WHS Student First Aid Module](#).
 - if the emergency medication was administered due to a curriculum activity or other workplace factor (e.g. exposure to science experiment fumes or consumption of allergen causing an allergic reaction), record the incident in MyHR Home > Workplace Health and Safety > Add New Incident> Injury/illness tab;
 - contact parent/carer as soon as possible to advise them of the incident (record this contact in OneSchool); and
 - refer to the [School alerts](#) procedure to determine if notification of regional office and/or senior executives is required
 - ensure medication is replaced (individual student medication is replaced by parent/carer; emergency first aid medication replaced by school).

2. After administering routine medication or as a non-emergency response

- Staff will:
 - immediately record details in the appropriate record sheet;
 - notify the parent/carer if 'as-needed' medication has been administered;
 - notify the classroom teacher and parent/carer if student refuses their medication to determine possible risks and any further actions; and
 - notify the parent/carer if the medication is approaching its expiry date or if the quantity is low.

3. If side effects, medication errors or adverse reactions occur

- Staff will **IMMEDIATELY provide first aid and contact either:**
 - **Emergency services (000)** if the student has:
 - collapsed; and/or
 - is not breathing or has difficulty breathing; and/or
 - severe nausea or is vomiting; and/or
 - another severe reaction (e.g. hives, swollen lips, face gone pale, sweating, chills)

and/or

- the student has consumed unauthorised medication with or without an observable reaction.

- **OR**

- **Poisons helpline (13 11 26)** if the student has no observable adverse reaction following a medication error.

4. In all cases of side effects, medication errors and adverse reactions

- Staff will:
 - notify the principal/delegate as soon as possible to coordinate the response; and
 - record the incident and actions taken by staff (refer to the [Guidelines](#) (Appendix 6: Recording actions following medication side effects, errors and incidents)).
- Following this, the principal/delegate will:
 - report the critical incident to regional office as per the [School alerts](#) procedure.
 - in the case of medication that has caused an adverse or atypical reaction for the student, advise the parent/carer that staff will not continue to administer this medication unless further written advice has been received from the prescribing health practitioner;
 - review the effectiveness of first aid and emergency response processes and amend where improvements are identified;
 - review, investigate, and implement corrective and preventative actions for work related incidents according to the [Health, safety and wellbeing incident management](#) procedure; and
 - communicate any change of practice to staff.

5. Storage and disposal of medication and equipment

1. To store medications

- Staff will:
 - establish and monitor procedures for safe and appropriate storage of medications (refer to the [Guidelines](#) Appendix 1: Considerations for storage of medications);
 - store medication in the original containers according to the manufacturer's instructions and special instructions from the pharmacist or prescribing health practitioner (including medication which needs to be stored below 25 °C);
 - ensure that medication required for an emergency response is stored in a safe, unlocked location where it is always easily accessible to authorised people in the event of an emergency;
 - store medication (other than medication required for an emergency response) in a:
 - non-portable, locked space such as cupboard/cabinet reserved for medications only; or
 - secure fridge (if required) with authorised access only; or
 - location determined by the principal/delegate to meet the student's individual health needs.
 - limit access to all medications to people authorised to administer those medications; and

- ensure accessing medication causes minimal disruption to the student's learning program and respects the student's dignity.
- 2. To dispose of medications**
- Staff will:
 - ensure safe disposal of sharps in accordance with the [Safe Handling and Disposal of Needles and Syringes](#) information sheet and
 - dispose of unused and unclaimed medication by:
 - asking the parent/carer to collect the medication from the school; or
 - advising parents/carers that unclaimed medications will be taken to a pharmacy to be disposed of.
- 3. When medication has been stolen, misused, or diverted from the person to whom it was originally prescribed**
- Staff will notify the school principal/delegate.
 - The principal/delegate will:
 - notify parents/carers to arrange a replacement dosage of the medication;
 - follow established procedures for missing property on school grounds;
 - contact [Regional Office](#); and
 - contact police if required (NOTE: this is mandatory when controlled drugs are involved).

Definitions

Term	Definition
Controlled drugs (Schedule 8 drugs)	<p>Prescription medication, such as Ritalin and dexamphetamine, which are restricted in their supply and use as they have the potential to cause dependence or be abused.</p> <p>They are controlled substances and are to be in a locked cabinet when not being administered.</p> <p>They are easily identified as the original packaging will be labelled 'Controlled drug'</p>
Delegate	<p>For the purposes of this procedure, the delegate is selected by the principal and is a teacher who is a member of the senior management team with the capability and capacity to fulfil the responsibilities of the principal in relation to this procedure e.g. Deputy Principal, Head of Department, Head of Student Services, Head of Curriculum.</p>
Health plans	<p>An overarching term describing documents completed by qualified health practitioners which provide the school with directions or guidelines to manage student's health support needs. Health plans include Action Plans, Emergency Health Plans and Individual Health Plans.</p>

Term	Definition
	<p>Action Plan</p> <p>A document developed by a medical professional to provide guidelines to safely manage a student's health support need/s, for example anaphylaxis or asthma.</p> <p>Emergency Health Plan (EHP)</p> <p>A plan developed by a health professional (e.g. registered nurse) when a student's health needs may require a response from school staff that extends beyond basic first aid. It provides clear step-by-step directions on how to safely manage a predictable medical emergency specific to certain chronic health conditions and the correct use of emergency medication. The plan is developed in consultation with the school staff, parent/carer, student, medical and other health professionals. The EHP is intended for use in the school setting only.</p> <p>Individual Health Plan (IHP)</p> <p>A plan developed by a health professional (e.g. registered nurse) that provides school staff with an understanding of a student's health condition, and the reasonable adjustments required to support the student on a daily basis at school. The IHP describes the routine procedure required at school, including step by step instructions for performing the student's health support procedure. The plan is developed in consultation with the school staff, parent/carer, student if appropriate, medical and other health professionals. The IHP is intended to be used in the school setting only.</p>
Medical authorisation	<p>For the purposes of this procedure, medical authorisation may take the form of a prescribing health practitioner's letter, a detailed health plan (signed by the prescribing health practitioner), the medication with a current pharmacy label with a prescribing health practitioners name listed, or a medication order.</p>
Medication error	<p>Any preventable error in administration that may cause or lead to harm to a student.</p> <p>A medication error includes any failure to administer medication as prescribed, including failure to administer the right medication:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to the right student • at the right time • in the right dose • by the right route. <p>Medication errors in a school environment may occur for a variety of reasons, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • student misidentification • incomplete / inaccurate documentation

Term	Definition
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • misreading documentation • confusion over the dose required • not administering medication when required.
Medications	<p>For the purposes of this procedure, medications are categorised according to whether it has been medically authorised for a specific student, the frequency the medication is administered (e.g. routinely or only as needed), and if it is required as an emergency response or a non-emergency response.</p> <p>Medically authorised</p> <p>Medication that has been authorised by a prescribing health practitioner under the Health (Drugs and Poisons) Regulation 1996 (Qld).</p> <p>Routine medication</p> <p>Medication required routinely for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • short-term treatment of an acute condition e.g. one course of antibiotics to treat infection • long-term or ongoing management of a specific disorder (e.g. attention deficit hyperactivity disorder) or health condition (e.g. cystic fibrosis, epilepsy, diabetes). <p>'As-needed' medication</p> <p>Medication authorised to be administered to a student 'as needed' in response to certain symptoms and in accordance with a medication order or health plan or written instructions from a prescribing health practitioner.</p> <p>This medication may be administered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • as a non-emergency response to known symptoms (e.g. antihistamine for hay fever, ointment for eczema) • as an emergency response to symptoms of known medical conditions (e.g. Midazolam for specific seizures, adrenaline auto-injector for anaphylaxis, blue reliever for severe asthma). <p>Emergency first aid medication</p> <p>Medication used as a first aid response and retained in the school's first aid kit e.g. adrenaline auto-injectors for anaphylaxis, asthma reliever for asthma. It is dispensed in a device that non-medical personnel can be trained to use.</p> <p>It is not medically authorised for a specific student.</p>

Term	Definition
Medication order	For the purposes of this procedure, a medication order is a document from a prescribing health practitioner which provides specific instructions and protocols for the safe administration of a medication.
Over-the-counter medication	<p>Medications that can be purchased from pharmacies, supermarkets, health food stores and other retailers without a prescription from a qualified health practitioner. Examples include cold remedies, cough syrups, anti-fungal treatments, non-prescription analgesics such as paracetamol as well as alternative medicines (traditional or complementary) such as herbal, aromatherapy and homoeopathic preparations, vitamins, minerals and nutritional supplements.</p> <p>Over-the-counter medication can only be administered at school if it has been medically authorised – see medical authorisation.</p>
Pharmacy label	<p>A label generated at the pharmacy that is attached to the original medication container including the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • student's name • strength and description/name of the medication • dose and route of administration (may include the duration of the therapy) • initials/logo of the pharmacist responsible for dispensing the medication • time or interval the medication is to be taken and • any other relevant directions for use e.g. whether the medication is to be taken with food. <p>If the medication has been prescribed by a prescribing health practitioner, the pharmacy label will include their name.</p>
Prescribing health practitioner	A qualified health professional who has completed the appropriate training, giving them the authority to prescribe certain medications under the Health (Drugs and Poisons) Regulation 1996 (Qld) e.g. doctor, dentist, optometrist, nurse practitioner. A pharmacist is not a prescribing health practitioner.
Qualified health practitioner	A health professional with the relevant licencing, skills and knowledge to assess, plan and evaluate care. This can be the student's treating doctor or health team or State Schools Registered Nurse. Qualified health practitioners are registered with the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency or are eligible for membership in the relevant national professional body.
Reasonable adjustment	A measure or action (or a group of measures or actions) taken by a school that has the effect of assisting a student with a disability to participate in education on the same basis as a student without a disability, and includes an aid, a facility, or a

Term	Definition
	service that the student requires because of their disability (Ref: Section 3.3 in the Disability Standards for Education 2005)
Route of administration	<p>The method by which medication is administered. This may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • buccal: trickled into the mouth between the gum and the cheek and absorbed via the mucous membrane • enteral: given via nasogastric or gastrostomy tube directly into the stomach • inhalation: such as inhalers and spacers for asthma • injection: a needle given into a fat layer or muscle through the skin e.g. adrenaline auto-injector or insulin • nasal: dripped or sprayed into the nose and absorbed via the mucous membrane • oral: swallowed e.g. in the form of a tablet, capsule or liquid • rectal: inserted into the rectum e.g. suppositories or enemas • sublingual: placed under the tongue and absorbed via the mucous membrane • topical: substance applied directly on the skin or body part e.g. a cream, ointment, skin patch, ear/eye drops, gel.
School	For the purpose of this procedure, a school is a state school or state educational institution, including state outdoor and environmental educational centres and state school operated residential boarding facilities.
Secure	For the purposes of this procedure, secure means safe and out of reach of students.

Legislation

- [Education \(General Provisions\) Act 2006 \(Qld\)](#) sections 5 and 426
- [Disability Standards for Education 2005 \(Cwth\)](#)
- [Health \(Drugs and Poisons\) Regulation 1996 \(Qld\)](#) Chapter 1, Part 5; and sections 256A, 256B and 277
- [Human Rights Act 2019 \(Qld\)](#) Divisions 2 and 3
- [Work Health and Safety Act 2011 \(Qld\)](#)
- [Work Health and Safety Regulation 2011 \(Qld\)](#) section 42

Delegations/Authorisations

- Nil

Policies and procedures in this group

- Nil

Supporting information for this procedure

- Guidelines
 - [Guidelines for the administration of medications in schools](#)
- Forms – consent, authorisation, record
 - [Consent to administer medication](#)
 - [Record of medication administration \(routine medication\)](#)
 - [Record of medication administration \('as-needed' medication\)](#)
 - [Record of medication administration \(insulin\)](#)
- Information sheet
 - Administration of medications in Queensland state schools: Information for parents and health practitioners
- Processes for principals
 - [Process for principals: Communicating information about the administration of medications](#)
 - [Process for principals: Staff training in the administration of medications](#)

Other resources

- Guidelines
 - [Anaphylaxis Guidelines for Queensland State Schools](#)
 - [Asthma Guidelines for Queensland Schools](#)
 - [Guidelines for Queensland schools – Students with diabetes](#)
 - [First aid kits and facilities](#)
- [Inclusive Education policy](#)
- [Infection control procedure](#)
- [Managing first aid in the workplace procedure](#)
- [Managing students health support needs at school procedure](#)
- [Restrictive practices procedure](#)
- [School alerts procedure](#)
- [Supporting students with asthma and/or at risk of anaphylaxis at school procedure](#)
- [School excursions and international school study tours procedure](#)
- Instructions

- [Returning Unwanted Medicines](#)
- [Safe Handling and Disposal of Needles and Syringes](#)
- Reference documents
 - [Required forms for administering medication at school](#)

Contact

For further information, please contact your [closest regional office](#).

Review date

Xx/xx/xx

Superseded versions

Previous seven years shown. Minor version updates not included.

3.0 HLS-PR-009: Administration of routine and emergency medication in schools

4.0 Administration of medication in schools

5.0 Administration of medication in schools

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