



Prescriber Bag supplies for endorsed midwives – Frequently Asked Questions

Last updated: 27 March 2025

Q1) What is the Prescriber Bag?

Health practitioners attending to patients with acute medical conditions may carry medical equipment and medicines to deal with conditions requiring urgent treatment. Through the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS), certain medicines may be provided without charge to prescribers who in turn can supply them free to patients for emergency use. This is known as the “Prescriber Bag”.

Q2) Which medicines are available via the Prescriber Bag arrangements?

The medicines available via the Prescriber Bag are listed on:

<https://www.pbs.gov.au/browse/doctorsbag>

Endorsed midwives must only request medicines with the ‘MW’ symbol appearing in the ‘Prescriber code’ column. The list is subject to change as medicines can be added or deleted at the request of the pharmaceutical companies from time to time.

Q3) As an endorsed midwife, should I carry specific medicines with me for emergency use?

The specific medicines (if any) that a health practitioner carries depends on that individual health practitioner’s scope of practice, context of work and the anticipated health needs of the patient population or locality.

For example, if you practice solely in a public hospital/health centre, the medicines that you might need in an emergency are supplied by the hospital/health centre’s pharmacy department or through existing medicine procurement arrangements. However, if you provide private midwifery services outside of a hospital, you may consider carrying some medicines obtained through the PBS Prescriber Bag arrangements. Check with your employer about the arrangements for sourcing medicines if you are unsure.

Q4) Can I order Prescriber Bag medicines using my usual prescription pad?

No, prescribers can only obtain items from the Prescriber Bag once a month. You will need to order the correct stationary from Services Australia. Eligible endorsed midwives can order a *Prescriber Bag Supplies Order Book* from Services Australia using their Health Professional Online Services (HPOS) account. Refer to the Services Australia website for more information. If you have no access to a computer or the internet, please contact Services Australia by phone on 132 290.

Each prescriber is required to order their own Prescriber Bag order pad for their own use. This ensures the prescriber can always place an order each month if they need too. If you are based in a workplace that has multiple medical practitioners and/or nurse practitioners pooling prescriber bag supplies, check existing supply levels and expiration dates of medicines that you may need before ordering further supplies or new supplies.



Q5) I've got the Prescriber Bag Supplies Order Book, now how do I order medicines?

Complete the relevant fields in the order book, using only an order form with the current month printed on it.

The completed order form can then be taken to a PBS-approved community pharmacy to be dispensed. In some cases, the pharmacy may not have the requested medicine(s) in stock and may need time to order the medicine in from a wholesaler.

Q6) Is there anything else I need to do or have done in supplying these medicines to a particular patient?

Yes. Like a pharmacist supplying prescription medicines from a prescription to the named person on the prescription, state or territory law stipulates the minimum details required for the lawful supply of medicines(s) that a registered health practitioner must comply with. Become familiar with the relevant state or territory laws where you practice. This includes matters such as record keeping, labelling of supplied medicines and how the medicines are stored once they have left the pharmacy and are in your possession.

Q7) Why are some medicines I need not included in the PBS prescriber bag?

New and amended PBS listings (including Prescriber Bag items) must first be recommended by the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee's (PBAC). PBAC's consideration is generally initiated by the pharmaceutical company responsible for supplying a medicine because the company usually holds the scientific data and other information necessary to inform the PBAC's consideration. Pharmaceutical companies make their own decisions about whether they will submit their medicine for PBS listing and cannot be compelled to make a submission.

On 1 February 2025, several PBS listings were amended to include endorsed midwives as authorised prescribers, including some PBS Prescriber Bag listings. This followed from PBAC's consideration at its September 2024 intracycle meeting of a list of PBS medicines that were requested by stakeholders for prescribing by endorsed midwives as part of a review. Some of these medicines were requested for emergency use or for use in circumstances where it would be impractical for the patient to obtain the medicine from a pharmacy (e.g. naloxone for opioid overdose). As part of its consideration, the PBAC recommended that endorsed midwives be added as authorised prescribers for certain Prescriber Bag listings. Some requested medicines were excluded from PBAC consideration in the review if they were not already listed on the PBS.

Q8) Where can I find more information?

For information on the Prescriber Bag arrangements or ordering PBS stationery, refer to:

- The PBS website: <https://www.pbs.gov.au/browse/doctorsbag>
- Services Australia website on ordering PBS stationery: <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/order-pbs-and-rpbs-stationery>
- Services Australia website on adding and linking HPOS for PBS: www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/adding-and-linking-to-hpos-for-pbs
- Health Professional Education website: https://hpe.servicesaustralia.gov.au/PBS_prescribers.html
- Review of PBS prescribing by endorsed midwives: <https://www.pbs.gov.au/info/reviews/review-pbs-items-prescribing-nurse-practitioners-endorsed-midwives>