

# SafeScript

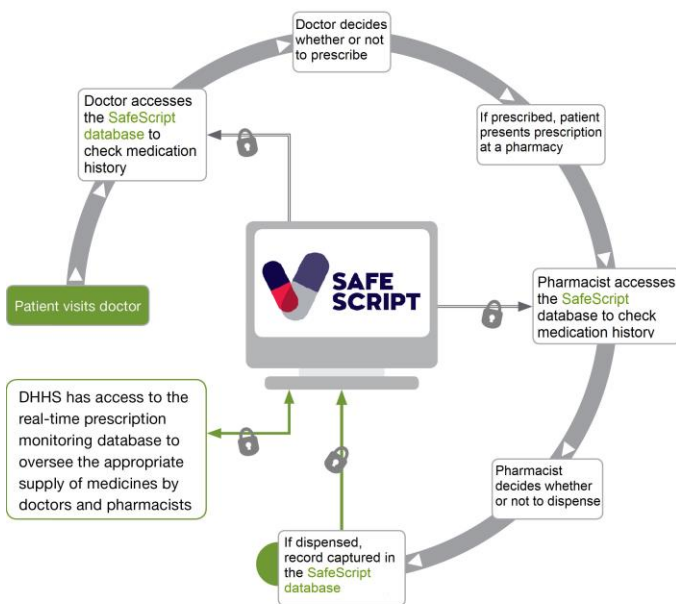
## Frequently Asked Questions – for health professionals

### What is this initiative about?

The Victorian Government is taking action to reduce the growing harms, including deaths, from high-risk prescription medicines by implementing SafeScript, Victoria’s real-time prescription monitoring system.

### What is SafeScript?

SafeScript is computer software that allows pharmacy dispensing records for certain medicines to be transmitted in real-time to a centralised database which can then be accessed by doctors and pharmacists during a consultation.



**SafeScript data security**  
Only users with the right security credentials in GP clinics or pharmacies can access the SafeScript database. Patient searches by GPs and pharmacies are logged and can be audited to monitor phishing or inappropriate use.

SafeScript provides prescribers and pharmacists with a clinical tool to make safer decisions about whether to prescribe or dispense a high-risk medicine, and facilitate the early identification, treatment and support for patients who are developing signs of dependence.

### When will SafeScript be implemented?

SafeScript commenced implementation in October 2018, with a focus on the Western Victoria Primary Health Network catchment. The focus of implementation shifts to the rest of Victoria in early 2019.

### Why is SafeScript necessary?

The harms and increasing number of deaths from prescription medicines are a major public health concern.

Deaths in Victoria	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
<b>Pharmaceutical medicines</b>	<b>303</b>	<b>312</b>	<b>316</b>	<b>356</b>	<b>381</b>	<b>414</b>
Illicit drugs	130	163	164	227	263	271
Road toll	282	243	248	252	290	258

In 2017 there were 414 Victorian drug overdose deaths involving pharmaceutical medicines, higher than the number of overdose deaths involving illicit drugs (271), and higher than the road toll (258). In the latest Ambulance Victoria data (2016-17), there were more ambulance callouts for use of pharmaceutical medicines (10,517) than for illicit drugs (11,097).

### What medicines are monitored in SafeScript?

Based on the latest international and local research and recommendations from an expert advisory group, the system monitors prescription medicines that are causing the greatest harm to the Victorian community.

These include all Schedule 8 medicines, such as oxycodone (brand names include OxyContin and Endone), morphine (brand names include Kapanol and MS Contin), alprazolam (brand names include Kalma), methylphenidate (brand names include Ritalin) and dexamphetamine and some Schedule 4 medicines including all benzodiazepines such as diazepam, ‘Z-drugs’ such as zolpidem, quetiapine and codeine.



### **How does SafeScript collect prescription information?**

The data required for SafeScript is collected automatically from Prescription Exchange Services (PES) which currently support the electronic transfer of prescriptions from medical clinics to pharmacies.

When a prescription is issued at a medical clinic or dispensed at a pharmacy, the PES sends a record of the prescription in real-time to SafeScript. No additional data entry is necessary to record a prescription in SafeScript.

### **How do I view records from my medical clinic or pharmacy?**

SafeScript is quick and easy-to-use with minimal interruption to clinical workflow so that patient care remains the key focus.

Clinicians receive pop-up notifications from their desktops within seconds when a prescription has been issued or dispensed which prompts you if a review of the records in SafeScript is necessary. The notification also provides a direct link to the patient's record.

### **Does SafeScript decide whether I can or cannot prescribe or dispense a medicine?**

SafeScript is a clinical support tool which enables clinicians to make more informed decisions. SafeScript assists clinicians with identifying high-risk circumstances, however, it does not prevent you from prescribing or dispensing a medicine if you consider it to be clinically necessary. The appropriateness of prescribing or dispensing a medicine remains your clinical decision.

Clinicians are strongly encouraged to complete the comprehensive training provided as part of SafeScript implementation, which has a focus on enhancing clinical and counselling skills. When you identify a high-risk circumstance in SafeScript, this training will give you the confidence and skills to enable you to continue to provide safe and appropriate ongoing care to your patient.

### **Will the use of SafeScript be mandatory?**

After an 18 month introductory period to allow health practitioners to familiarise themselves with the system, it will be mandatory to check SafeScript prior to writing or dispensing a prescription for a high-risk medicine.

This follows worldwide best practice, as mandatory systems adopted in other countries have shown to provide greater reduction in harms from high-risk prescription medicines.

There will be exceptions in some circumstances, including when treating patients in hospitals, prisons, police gaols, aged care and palliative care.

### **What support is provided to patients and health professionals for the implementation of SafeScript?**

SafeScript is accompanied by a range of initiatives to support and prepare patients and health professionals for its implementation.

These include:

- a public awareness campaign to prepare the general public, including consumers and families, for SafeScript and improve understanding of the risks associated with some prescription medicines
- training for prescribers and pharmacists, on how to more safely prescribe and dispense and respond to the needs of patients, being delivered by a consortium comprising all Victorian Primary Health Networks and NPS MedicineWise
- additional peer to peer support for General Practitioners
- some minor enhancements to the alcohol and other drug treatment system.

### **How does this initiative impact current arrangements for prescribing these medicines in Victoria?**

As SafeScript will now provide clinicians direct access to prescription histories of their patients for high-risk medicines, there is reduced reliance on the Schedule 8 permit system to assist in the co-ordination of care. This means that some of the Schedule 8 permit requirements for prescribers may be reduced when they check SafeScript before prescribing a Schedule 8 medicine.

Further information on permit requirements is available on the [Medicines and Poisons Regulation website](https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/drugs-and-poisons/patient-schedule-8-treatment-permits) <<https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/drugs-and-poisons/patient-schedule-8-treatment-permits>>.

### **Why can't the My Health Record be used for real-time prescription monitoring?**

The My Health Record is a patient-controlled summary of a patient's health record, in which patients can choose what is included and who can view their medication history.

SafeScript is different because it allows doctors and pharmacists involved in a patient's care access to a complete record of high-risk medicines that have been supplied. Patients will not be able to opt-out or restrict what medication history can be viewed.

**Where can I get further information?**

Further information is available on the [SafeScript website](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/safescript) at <www.health.vic.gov.au/safescript>.

The [SafeScript General Enquiries](mailto:safescript@dhhs.vic.gov.au) team can be contacted on 9096 5633 or via email <safescript@dhhs.vic.gov.au>.