



4th December 2025

Circular 020/25

Phased Dispensing – Community Pharmacy Contractor Agreement 2025

Dear Doctor,

The supply of medication in instalments (“phased dispensing”) was introduced in 1996 for patient safety reasons. Under the General Medical Services (GMS) Scheme, phased dispensing can support patients prescribed certain high-risk medications, who are at risk of medication misadventure when these medications are supplied in the typical monthly instalments.

Monitored Dosing Systems (MDS) are systems that enable the individual medicine doses to be organised according to the prescribed dose schedule. These are sometimes referred to as blister packs or compliance aids.

MDS and phased dispensing are two separate processes. Phased dispensing requires the patient to present to the pharmacy on multiple occasions in the month, e.g. each week, for dispensing of medicines. Phased dispensing is in place where it is unsafe for the patient to have the totality of their medication in one supply occasion e.g. psychotropic drugs. A MDS is ordinarily provided in one visit and packaged to indicate when medication should be taken to facilitate compliance.

In recent years, a practice has developed whereby MDS are inappropriately associated with the phased dispensing process. The Department of Health and HSE have never approved reimbursement arrangements for the filling of MDS by Community Pharmacy Contractors.

As part of the Community Pharmacy Agreement 2025, it has been agreed to introduce improved controls in the management of phased dispensing and to limit it to specified high risk drugs, where a patient safety concern may exist. This is being done in a way which puts patient safety first. This means that from **1st January 2026**, phased dispensing will be limited to a defined set of high-risk medication classes:

- Psychotropics (ATC codes N05 and N06);
- Opioids (N02A);
- Codeine (R05DA04); and
- Pregabalin and gabapentin (N02BF).

A full list of the approved medications will be published online at www.pcrs.ie.

The associated approval process which was in place for GPs and Pharmacists to apply for phased dispensing on behalf of their patient on an individual basis will no longer be in place



from 1st January 2026. This phased dispensing approval system will be stood down and the new arrangement will come into effect which limits phased dispensing to the defined set of high-risk medicines. Individual patient approval is not required.

Phased dispensing continues to be applied under the GMS scheme only. It is not available under any other Community Drug Scheme.

It is entirely acceptable for a pharmacy to continue to offer, as a quality initiative, to provide a patient's medicines in a MDS. This continues to be a private arrangement between the pharmacy and the patient and is not a state-funded service.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Shaun Flanagan', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Shaun Flanagan,
Primary Care Reimbursement Service