



30<sup>th</sup> June 2023

Circular 024/23

**Information from the Department of Health relating to the authorisation of Opioid Substitution Treatment**

Dear Doctor,

Please find enclosed a communication from the Department of Health in relation to:

1. Authorisation of supply of methadone to pharmacies for non-opioid dependent patients.
2. Authorising Opioid Substitution Treatment (OST) Prescription Forms for non-opioid dependent patients.

The Department of Health have advised that all requests should be sent by email only to:

[Controlled\\_Drugs@health.gov.ie](mailto:Controlled_Drugs@health.gov.ie)

The phone numbers previously provided are no longer operational.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Shaun Flanagan', is located below the text 'Yours faithfully,'.

Shaun Flanagan  
Primary Care Eligibility & Reimbursement



To whom it concerns,

The Controlled Drugs Unit of the Department of Health authorises:

- 1. The supply of methadone for non-opiate dependent clients to Community Pharmacies from Wholesalers.**
- 2. The supply of Opioid Substitution Therapy (OST) prescriptions to GPs.**

Please note that all requests **should be sent by email only** to:

[Controlled\\_Drugs@health.gov.ie](mailto:Controlled_Drugs@health.gov.ie)

The phone numbers previously provided are no longer operational.

**For your information, please see the guidelines below:**

- 1. Authorisation of supply of methadone to pharmacies for non-opiate dependent patients**

If a pharmacy requires authorisation to be supplied with methadone, the following information will be required:

- Name and address of the pharmacy
- Contact name and telephone number for the pharmacist
- Preferred supplier and the pharmacy's account number with that supplier
- GMS number (*where applicable*)

The Controlled Drugs Unit will process requests to the relevant suppliers (United Drug or Uniphar) as urgently as possible in order to ensure that the patient has a supply of methadone, especially when they leave hospital or a hospice.

- 2. Authorising methadone prescription forms for non-opiate dependent patients**

Hospitals and hospices discharging patients, as well as GPs continuing treatment in the community, request official methadone prescription forms (**in relation to non-opiate dependent patients only**) through the Controlled Drugs Unit of the Department of Health.

In order to request the Methadone Prescription forms, practitioners or pharmacies should contact the Controlled Drugs Unit of the Department of Health at the following email address: **Controlled\_Drugs@health.gov.ie**



**The following information must be provided to the Department:**

- Name of the Consultant(s) or GP
- Name and address of the hospital/hospice or GP practice
- Contact name and telephone number of the person who is in contact with the Department
- GMS number (*where applicable*)
- GPs should also supply the name of the consultant who has initiated the treatment

The Department will authorise 20 prescription forms for a hospital/hospice or 5 prescription forms for a GP. Under certain circumstances more prescription forms may be issued. The Controlled Drugs Unit will process these requests as urgently as possible. The HSE Primary Care Reimbursement Service (PCRS) issues the prescription forms to the hospital, hospice or GP immediately on receipt of instruction from the Department of Health.

- The OST regulations do not apply to methadone prescribed in a hospital for administration to an inpatient or for supply in restricted circumstances to patients who have attended the hospital.
- In general, when a patient is being discharged into the community from a hospice/hospital the first prescription dispensed is written by the consultant, with subsequent prescriptions being written by the patient's GP.
- All prescriptions must be written on the official methadone prescription form and that form must show the name of the medical consultant who initiated the treatment in the hospital or hospice.

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