# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

# PHARMACEUTICAL BENEFITS SCHEME (PBS) BOTULINUM TOXIN PROGRAM

The PBS Botulinum Toxin Program helps eligible patients access PBS-subsidised botulinum toxin to assist in the treatment of conditions such as facial spasms, urinary incontinence, chronic migraine and symptoms associated with cerebral palsy.

On 1 September 2015, the way PBS-subsidised botulinum toxin is supplied changed to better align with other PBS arrangements, using PBS prescriptions and hospital pharmacy coordination points. PBS botulinum toxin medicines are not supplied through community pharmacies, even if they are acting as agents for public hospitals.

Changes to relevant PBS item codes (from 1 January 2017) and the *National Health (Botulinum Toxin Program) Special Arrangement 2015* (effective 1 March 2017) allow prescribers to write two prescriptions for botulinum toxin on the same day, where a patient requires treatment for two different conditions.

Patient and prescriber eligibility criteria remain unchanged. All botulinum toxin medicines supplied under the PBS are subject to the new arrangements. A full list of the Program medicines and PBS eligibility criteria is available on the [PBS website](http://www.pbs.gov.au/browse/section100-mf).

## Information for Prescribers

Prescribers are responsible for ensuring that they meet the PBS prescriber eligibility criteria applicable to each indication for which a botulinum toxin medicine is prescribed. Prescribers should note that separate state or territory requirements may also apply.

Access to PBS botulinum toxin is prescription-based. Prescribers must write a prescription for each patient, for each indication and each treatment period, ensuring the prescriptions they write comply with PBS requirements for subsidised botulinum toxin, including patient and prescriber eligibility criteria. Prescribers are able to write two prescriptions for botulinum toxin for the same patient on the same day, where there is a clinical need to treat two different conditions.

The correct prescription type is a PBS Authority required [STREAMLINED] prescription, with the use of streamlined authority codes that are specific to the indication for use. These codes can be found on the [PBS website](http://www.pbs.gov.au/browse/section100-mf), and apply for prescriptions where the quantity required on prescription does not exceed the PBS maximum quantity given in the [PBS Schedule](http://www.pbs.gov.au/browse/section100-mf).

PBS Authority required [STREAMLINED] prescriptions can be generated by popular clinical practice software and printed on blank PBS prescription stationery. Alternatively, a prescriber’s personal pre‑printed PBS Authority prescription pads may be used, with the correct streamlined authority code added to the prescription after the name of the prescribed product. Including the correct streamlined authority code is important to ensure the supply and claiming of same-day prescriptions can occur.

The ordering, dispensing and claiming of PBS botulinum toxin must take place with the involvement of a Section 94 approved hospital authority (pharmacy). A range of delivery options are open to prescribers depending on the practice location, including direct manufacturer supply of botulinum toxin medicines to a prescriber’s rooms, rather than via the hospital pharmacy. Patients must not be placed in a position where they handle botulinum toxin medicines.

Prescribers may order botulinum toxin medicines from hospital pharmacies in advance of providing a valid PBS prescription/s to cover the supply. PBS Regulations require prescribers to make prescriptions available within seven days of a verbal or written order.

Patient co-payments apply for each prescription of a botulinum toxin medicine, whether a patient is treated as a public or private patient. While hospital authorities are not required to collect co‑payments if they so choose, if co-payments are to be collected, local arrangements should be made between the hospital authority and prescribers. Patients will need to be advised of local arrangements, and should also be made aware that, if they are prescribed PBS botulinum toxin for more than one indication, more than one co-payment will apply. Current PBS co-payments for concessional and general patients can be found on the [PBS website - Fees, Patient Contributions and Safety Net Thresholds.](http://www.pbs.gov.au/info/healthpro/explanatory-notes/front/fee)

PBS-subsided botulinum toxin vials must not be split across patients as multi-use is not permitted under PBS Regulations. While the PBS permits the prescribing of multiple vials of botulinum toxin for a patient per indication, prescribers are reminded to prescribe only the quantity sufficient for the relevant procedure. This may not be known until the patient has been assessed on presentation. Maximum quantities per prescription for each botulinum toxin product are listed on the [PBS website](http://www.pbs.gov.au/browse/section100-mf).

In clinical circumstances where the quantity of vials required for a patient’s immediate treatment (for a single indication) exceeds the PBS maximum quantity given in the PBS Schedule, prescribers must seek prior approval to prescribe that quantity from Services Australia, via either Telephone Authority Applications FreecallTM service 1800 888 333 or the Online PBS Authorities system. Further information regarding the Online PBS Authorities system is available on the [Services Australia website](https://www.humanservices.gov.au/health-professionals/enablers/pharmaceutical-benefits-scheme-authorities).

## Where can I seek further information?

Any further queries can be emailed to the PBS Botulinum Toxin Program mailbox.

## Information for pharmacies

A Section 94 approved hospital authority must be involved in the ordering, supply and PBS claiming of botulinum toxin products. Local arrangements may be made between the hospital authority and the prescriber for the delivery of botulinum toxin to, or collection by, the prescriber, noting that patients must not be placed in a position where they handle botulinum toxin medicines. Delivery direct from product manufacturers to a prescriber’s rooms is also permitted provided there is a script. Local arrangements may also be made between the hospital authority and prescribers for collection of patient co-payments, as only hospital authorities are permitted to supply and make claims to the Commonwealth in respect of PBS-subsidised botulinum toxin; and Hospital authorities are able to supply and claim for botulinum toxin pharmaceutical benefits, on presentation of a valid PBS prescription, for the treatment of all eligible patients.

Pharmacists should note that a PBS benefit like botulinum toxin that is subject to Authority required or Authority required [STREAMLINED] requirements cannot be supplied prior to the date of prescribing.

Section 94 approved hospital authorities are remunerated for supplying PBS-subsidised botulinum toxin in the same way that they are remunerated for supplying medicines listed under the PBS Highly Specialised Drugs Program and may raise a patient charge for those supplies in accordance with Commonwealth legislation.

Pharmacists must claim for the supply of botulinum toxin items using PBS item codes. These item codes correspond to the different indications for which each brand, form and strength of botulinum toxin may be prescribed, as identified by the streamlined authority code included on the prescription. For current PBS item codes please refer to [PBS Schedule](http://www.pbs.gov.au/browse/section100-mf).

Where a prescriber has written two botulinum toxin prescriptions for the same brand, form and strength of botulinum toxin for the same person on the same day consistent with legislative requirements, pharmacists are able to claim for each supply as the applicable PBS item codes are different.

For assistance in relation to claiming matters, please call the Services Australia General Enquiries line on 132 290.

## Information for patients

Patients visit their specialist medical practitioner for assessment and treatment and are not required to take a prescription for botulinum toxin to the hospital pharmacy.

Specialist medical practitioners are able to write a patient two prescriptions for botulinum toxin on the same day, where there is a clinical need to treat two different conditions.

Patient co-payments apply for each prescription of a botulinum toxin medicine. If a patient is prescribed PBS botulinum toxin for treatment of more than one condition (for example dynamic equinus foot deformity and spasticity of the upper limb), more than one co-payment will apply. Standard PBS patient eligibility criteria and entitlement rules also apply, enabling patients to access the PBS Safety Net and patient refund arrangements. The prescriber will advise what local arrangements are in place for payment of the co-payment. Current PBS co-payments for concessional and general patients and further information on PBS Safety Net arrangements can be found on the [PBS website - Fees, Patient Contributions and Safety Net Thresholds.](http://www.pbs.gov.au/info/healthpro/explanatory-notes/front/fee)