

9. Pharmacy dispensing



Pharmacists are an integral part of the team providing community-based opioid substitution treatment/OST; in fact, you will see the pharmacist more often than any other person involved in your treatment so the relationship you have with your pharmacist is an important one.

Things to be aware of when going to a community pharmacy:

- You need to remove your sunglasses because the pharmacist needs to assess you when you go to pick up and they can't do that if you're wearing sunnies.
- You might need to provide some form of identification. AOTS faxes and posts a digital photo of you to the pharmacy so they can be sure they're dispensing the right dose to the right person. However, if you're not known to the pharmacist (it could be a locum or you might be picking up from a pharmacy that's not your usual one) you may be asked to show some ID.
- Please ask anyone with you not to accompany you into the dispensing area.
- The pharmacist may do things for reasons you might not be aware of. For example, the pharmacist might serve everyone else before you because they are respecting your privacy.
- You need to speak to the pharmacist after consuming your dose.
- Leave used cups in the dispensing area.
- Check that the caps on any takeaway methadone bottles are intact before you leave the pharmacy. Sometimes takeaways leak so keep them in an upright position. It's a good idea to put any takeaway bottle/s in a small zip-lock plastic bag (rather than a paper bag); that way any leakage can be salvaged.
- If you're receiving Suboxone®, you need to wait 2 to 10 minutes in the pharmacy for the tablet/s to dissolve under your tongue. (For more information see booklet *Suboxone® treatment with CADS*)

The pharmacist is expected to:

- provide a non-judgemental service while supervising consumption of methadone, Suboxone® or other opioid substitution on the days you're prescribed to consume at the pharmacy,
- listen to and where appropriate respond to any relevant problems you may be having,
- support you to raise any concerns with your key worker or prescribing GP,
- liaise and maintain communication with AOTS and/or your GP on a regular basis. (NZ Practice Guidelines 2008 p.55)

Pharmacists are obliged to notify AOTS or the GP when a client:

- is regularly intoxicated/ stoned when they go to the pharmacy or is exhibiting withdrawal symptoms
- behaves inappropriately, for example by being abusive or threatening,
- diverts or make a serious attempt to divert their meds,
- has deteriorating physical, emotional or mental health and wellbeing,
- misses two or more consecutive doses. The pharmacist can't dispense if a client hasn't collected their methadone, Suboxone® or other OST meds for 3 consecutive days without written authorisation from the prescriber (though some pharmacists will contact AOTS or your GP if a client misses one days dosing.)

Also available:

- Opioid treatment with AOTS
- Facts about methadone
- First methadone dose and stabilisation
- Accidental overdose
- Ongoing Opioid Substitution Treatment (OST)
- Indicators of stability
- Clinical tests: blood, urine, etc.
- Restabilisation
- Pharmacy dispensing
- Changes to prescriptions
- Holiday arrangements within NZ
- Travelling overseas
- Methadone takeaways
- Shared Care with your GP
- Thinking about coming off?
- Involuntarily withdrawal
- Pregnancy and opioid treatment
- Methadone and medication interactions
- Driving and OST
- Finding a GP
- Facts about buprenorphine (Suboxone®)
- Suboxone® treatment with CADS

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Changes to scripts

Pharmacists can't make changes to your script without permission from the prescribing doctor.

- For example, AOTS does not support the dilution of Biodone. However, if you choose to have your takeaway methadone diluted, you need to ask your prescriber to write 'dilute' with dilution volume or concentration on the script.
- Any changes to an existing script require a new script to be written; doctors can't scribble things out or authorise changes over the phone without following up with a new prescription.
- If the prescriber's instructions are unclear or seem to be incorrect, the pharmacist is required to check with the prescriber. (For more details see *Information Sheet 10 Changes to Prescriptions*)
- Pharmacists can't replace lost, stolen or leaked doses and AOTS will only replace them in exceptional circumstances.

Cancelled doses and cancelled takeaways

GPs, AOTS staff or pharmacists can cancel methadone or Suboxone[®] doses or takeaway arrangements in order to:

- prevent a client from double dosing,
- prevent an intoxicated/stoned person from receiving additional medication,
- prevent a situation that might endanger a client's health and life,
- ensure an accurate medication serum level is obtained (For more details see *Information Sheet 7 Clinical tests*),
- re-establish contact with a client where all other attempts to do so have failed (NZ Practice Guidelines 2008 p.59).

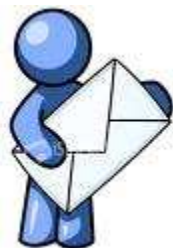
Doses and takeaways may also be cancelled if something unexpected happens like you end up in hospital.

Clients must be notified directly of any dose cancellation. If you can't be contacted by phone, a confidential letter will be sent to the pharmacy stating the reasons for the cancellation. If this happens, contact AOTS or your prescribing GP as soon as possible.

Incorrect dosing

Procedures are in place for pharmacists to follow if they administer less or more than the prescribed dose. In either case the client must be notified as soon as the error is detected. It's therefore a good idea to make sure the pharmacy has your up-to-date contact details so they can get hold of you if necessary (in the event of incorrect dosing, disasters, unforeseen pharmacy closures etc).

Receiving Mail at the Pharmacy



Occasionally your pharmacist will pass things on to you from AOTS, such as appointments and requests for lab tests.

Please follow the instructions given to you. If you are unclear about the instructions contact AOTS promptly.

(NB. Although you might receive mail at your pharmacy, AOTS is still required by regulations to have your home address.)

pRogReSsioN, the Consumer Team quarterly newsletter, is also available at most pharmacies – ask your pharmacist for a copy. If your pharmacy doesn't have it available for you, contact the CADS Consumer Team who can send you a copy or pick one up from a CADS unit.

Problems. If you have a problem with your pharmacist or with your pharmacy arrangements contact your key worker or your GP if you're a Shared Care client. You can also phone the AOTS Consumer Liaison or CADS Consumer Advisor on 815 5830.

Need to know more?

If you need more information about attending a pharmacy for your opioid substitution please speak to your key worker. For more information sheets, see CADS reception or visit the CADS website - www.cads.org.nz/More/Brochures.asp