

Drugs and poisons - regulations

Drugs and poisons are substances defined by law and controlled by the *Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Act 1981* and the *Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Regulations 2006*.

These substances include:

- Medicines available with a doctor's prescription
- Medicines only available from a pharmacy
- Drugs of dependence
- Many household, industrial and agricultural chemicals
- Veterinary medicines only available from a veterinary practitioner.

Drugs and poisons have benefits but may cause harm

Drugs have a wide variety of effects. They have benefits but can also cause harm. For example, incorrect use may lead to:

- Injury
- Illness
- Dependence (from some drugs)
- Death.

Harm from drugs and poisons has many causes

Drugs and poisons can cause harm in many ways. This may be caused by:

- Errors or contamination during manufacture, storage and distribution
- Incorrect or inadequate labelling and packaging
- Incorrect, inappropriate or excessive prescribing
- Incorrect, inappropriate or excessive use.

Preventing harm from drugs and poisons

Drugs and Poisons Regulation is the program area of the Department of Health Victoria that helps protect the health of the public. It uses a variety of strategies and legislation to ensure drugs and poisons are used correctly and to minimise or deter the likelihood of misuse and abuse.

For instance, the program area:

- Issues licences and permits which limit the manufacture, distribution, purchase and use of drugs and poisons to properly trained and equipped persons.
- Administers standards for the labelling and packaging of drugs and poisons that are intended to protect the public from harm.
- Issues permits to doctors to coordinate the treatment of patients who are receiving drugs of dependence on prescription.
- Oversees prescribing of drugs in the community and health services and supply by pharmacists.
- Investigates potential breaches of drugs and poisons legislation and prosecutes when necessary.

How to get information about drugs and poisons

Drugs and Poisons Regulation of the Department of Health Victoria can provide information on:

- Labelling and packaging
- Licences for manufacturers and wholesalers
- Permits to obtain drugs and poisons for industrial, educational and research purposes, and for providing health services
- Drug prescribing and supply by health professionals including doctors, pharmacists, veterinary practitioners, optometrists, podiatrists, dentists and nurse practitioners
- Permits to treat drug-dependent persons
- Notification of supply of unusually large quantities of drugs for any individual
- Notification of theft or loss of drugs and poisons or records from industry, research organisations and health services
- Use of standing orders in hospitals.

Where to get help

- In an emergency, call triple zero (000)
- Victorian Poisons Information Centre Tel. 131 126 – seven days a week, 24 hours a day – for advice about first aid in the event of poisoning, suspected poisoning, bites and stings, mistakes with medicines and poisoning prevention.
- DirectLine – for counselling or information about the treatment of drug-dependence Tel. 1800 888 236
- Medicines Line (Australia) Tel. 1300 MEDICINE (1300 633 424) – for information on prescription, over-the-counter and complementary medicines
- Adverse Medicines Events (AME) Line Tel. 1300 134 237 – to report a problem with your medicine
- Drugs and Poisons Regulation – for advice on implementation of legislation associated with drugs and poisons Tel. 1300 364 545
- Medicare Australia – for information on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme Tel. 132 290
- Your doctor
- Your pharmacist.

Things to remember

- Drugs and poisons are strictly regulated by law in Victoria.
- The law covers prescription and pharmacy-only drugs, drugs of dependence, and many household, industrial and agricultural chemicals.
- Information and advice on drug legislation is readily available.
- In case of accidental poisoning, contact the Victorian Poisons Information Centre.

This page has been produced in consultation with, and approved by:

Department of Health - Drugs and Poisons Regulation

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