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# The BOP Addiction Service Opioid Substitution Treatment (OST) - Changes to Prescriptions

**Te Whatu Ora**  
 Health New Zealand  
 Hauora a Toi Bay of Plenty

## Client initiated changes to prescriptions

There will be times when you will need to change pharmacies, or have your dispensing arrangements changed.

- BOPAS OST policy is that, wherever possible, changes to prescriptions will happen when a new prescription is due to be written.
- Short notice changes to scripts are often not possible because of practical things like no doctor being available. BOPAS OST asks for at least 3 working days' notice for changes and depending on what your request is, changes may not come into effect straight away.
- Contact your key worker straight away if any emergency type situations arise so they can help you. If your key worker is away, contact the duty OST person on 07 579 8391.
- Any time you are admitted to hospital let BOPAS OST know (or ask the hospital or a support person to do so on your behalf) as it is very important the medical staff involved in your care liaise with the service to ensure you receive your OST and correct medications.

## BOPAS OST initiated changes to prescriptions

New Zealand law requires that only an authorised registered medical practitioner can change your OST prescription. A pharmacist cannot change your prescription without specific authorisation from the prescriber.

- The only exception to this is where BOPAS OST staff can cancel an OST takeaway dose due to unexpected circumstances without a doctor's input (i.e., admitted into hospital) or concerns about your stability.
- In the event of prescription or dose cancellation you will be informed by phone as far as possible, stating the reasons for the cancellation.

If you can't be contacted, a message will be left for you at the pharmacy. If this happens, contact your case manager as soon as possible. If your key worker is away, contact the duty OST person on 07 579 8391.

## When you're reducing your dose and/or coming off:

- Some people find a flexible reduction regime works well for them. This means the doctor will prepare a script which allows you to take a drop in dose 'as requested' so it's at your own pace and you decide which day you feel ready for the reduced dose.
- If you want to slow the reduction down, it's a good idea to let your pharmacist know by how much before your next pick-up as many pharmacists prepare your takeaways in advance.

- 'Flexible dosing options' refers to reductions, not increases. This means the pharmacist can reduce but not increase your dose until they get a new script. If you feel your dose isn't holding you and you want to go back up tell your key worker who can arrange for the increased script to be signed off by the prescribing doctor.
- You might choose to do 'blind dosing' which means the doctor will write the script for reductions on particular days, but you will agree to not know which days it will happen. Some people find that if they are not expecting a reduction, they do not seem to notice it as much.
- You can also choose a fixed reduction which is when the doctor and you work out the rate and only the doctor can make changes to the regime; this is you handing control of the withdrawal over to someone else – which works well for some people.

If you are in GP Shared Care and are reducing your dose, the GP Addiction Liaison Nurse is there to discuss all these options and ideas, to help you to individualise your treatment plan around what feels best for you.

*Te Whatu Ora Hauora a Toi Bay of Plenty has an active commitment to the Treaty of Waitangi and the improvement of Māori health.*

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