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# The BOP Addiction Service Opioid Substitution Treatment (OST) - Pharmacy Dispensing

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

Pharmacists provide an important function in supporting community-based treatment of people on OST so the relationship you have with your pharmacist is an important one. When you first go onto BOPAS OST the case manager will ask you to identify a pharmacy for dispensing your dose. If you do not know of the dispensing pharmacies in your area, ask your case manager for a list and then you can go and then contact the pharmacies by phone, however going into the pharmacy in person may be more appropriate. The case manager will contact the pharmacy to confirm future dispensing arrangements etc.

## Things to be aware of when you go to a community pharmacy

Methadone is a Class B controlled drug, buprenorphine/naloxone is a controlled drug, class C4. So, the following procedures need to be followed to ensure safety and to adhere to legal requirements:

- Providing identification: if you're not known to the pharmacist (this particularly applies if you're consuming/picking-up from a pharmacy that's not your usual one, such as when you're on holiday or there's a locum Pharmacist on) you may be asked for identification.
- Speaking after consuming your dose: it's common practice for the pharmacist to ask you to speak after taking your OST.
- Removing sunglasses: the pharmacist needs to assess you when you go to consume/pick-up your OST so you may be asked to remove your sunglasses
- Used cups: cups aren't to be removed from the dispensing area or out of the pharmacy
- Takeaway bottles: pharmacists are to provide you with new bottles for takeaway doses, they will not re-use your bottles if you return them.
- Space: where possible, ask family or friends not to accompany you into the dispensing area

It's also important to be courteous to the pharmacist and other people in the pharmacy, and not to misconstrue or get upset about the pharmacist serving other people before you when what the pharmacist may be trying to do is respect your privacy.

Opioid Substitution Treatment: Most recent NZ Practice Guidelines state that the pharmacist is obliged to notify the prescriber i.e., BOPAS OST or your GP (GP Shared Care clients) if:

- you're intoxicated when you go to consume/pick-up
- you're abusive or threatening
- you divert or make a serious attempt to divert your OST
- the pharmacist believes you have used your OST intravenously

- you're exhibiting withdrawal symptoms
- the pharmacist sees a deterioration in your physical, emotion or mental wellbeing

## **Missing doses**

- If you miss picking up one dose the pharmacist may contact BOPAS OST or your GP (if you're a GP Shared Care client).
- If you miss two consecutive doses the NZ OST Guidelines strongly recommend that pharmacists contact the 'prescriber', (which means BOPAS OST or your GP)
- If you miss three consecutive doses (without authorisation from the prescriber) the pharmacist won't dispense to you without authorisation from the 'prescriber' (see above).

## **The pharmacist's responsibilities**

- provide a non-judgmental service
- supervise OST consumption on the days you're scripted to consume at the pharmacy
- liaise and maintain communication with BOPAS OST or your GP on a regular basis
- listen to and be aware of any relevant problems you may be having and communicate these to the case manager or prescribing GP
- direct you back to BOPAS OST or GP for GP Shared Care clients if you are having any problems (nausea, drowsiness) seemingly due to your OST (see current Opioid Substitution Treatment: NZ Practice Guidelines).

## **Receiving mail at the Pharmacy**

Occasionally your pharmacist will pass things on to you from BOPAS OST, such as requests for laboratory tests. Please follow the instructions given to you. If you are unclear about the instructions, contact your case manager promptly. (NB. Although you might receive mail at your pharmacy, this doesn't replace the need for BOPAS OST to have your home address).

## **Change to scripts**

New Zealand law requires that only an authorised doctor can change your OST prescription:

- A pharmacist cannot change your prescription without the prescriber's authorisation.
- Any changes to what's written on the script must be made on a new prescription.
- If the prescriber's instructions are unclear or seem to be incorrect, the pharmacist is required to check with the prescriber.

## **Cancelled doses and cancelled takeaway arrangements**

According to current Opioid Substitution Treatment: NZ Practice Guidelines, GPs, BOPAS OST staff or the pharmacist may cancel OST doses or takeaway arrangements if they believe it is necessary to:

- stop a client from double dosing
- prevent someone who's already intoxicated/stoned from receiving additional medication
- prevent a situation that might endanger a person's health or life
- ensure an accurate medication serum level is obtained
- re-establish contact with a client where other attempts to do so haven't worked

Doses and takeaways may also be held, i.e., if you did not attend (DNA) your case manager and/or medical officer appointments. Your dose may be held until you contact your case manager or may be cancelled if something unexpected happens like you end up in hospital.

In the event of your dose being held, your case manager will notify you via your pharmacist by fax that your dose on a specified date will be held if you do not present at the BOPAS office, you will also have been contacted by your case manager prior to the pharmacy receiving the fax to hold your dose.

## **Lost or stolen doses**

You need to ensure that any takeaway OST is transported and stored securely. BOPAS OST doesn't replace lost or stolen doses except in exceptional circumstances. If this happens to you, contact your case manager. (For more details see: Information Sheets 13. Takeaway OST).

## **Problems**

If you have a problem at any time with your pharmacist or with your pharmacy arrangements, contact your case manager or your GP if you're in GP Shared Care and your GP is your prescriber.

In cases of emergency contact the BOPAS OST duty staff member on 07 579 8391. In case of an emergency after-hours contact the Crisis Team 0800 800 508.

*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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Design & Print Dept - February 2023