

# GUIDELINES FOR ADMINISTERING MEDICATION IN SCHOOLS



# CONTENTS

Administering Medication.....	3
Privacy .....	3
Routines.....	3
Reminders.....	4
Storage .....	4
Delivery of Medication to the School.....	4
Refusal to take Medication.....	4
Self-Administration.....	4
Medication Register .....	5
Changes to Prescribed Medication .....	5
Action Plans .....	5
Written Health Care Plans .....	5
Antibiotics.....	6
Over the Counter Medication.....	6
General Points to Consider when Developing a School Policy on the Administration of Medication.....	6
Necessary Documentation.....	7
References.....	7
Sample Forms	
<i>Letter of Explanation to Parents</i> .....	9
Form 1: <i>Notification and Request by Parent/Guardian for the Administration of Medication During School Hours</i> .....	10
Form 2 : <i>Removed</i>	
Form 3 : <i>Medical Advice to School</i> .....	12
Form 4 : <i>School Acknowledgment of Request to Administer Medication</i> .....	13
Form 5 : <i>Notification of Change to Medication</i> .....	14
Form 6 : <i>Administration of Medicines to Student Register</i> .....	15



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## ADMINISTERING MEDICATION

Some students require medication and/or management of health conditions at school. While parents have the ultimate responsibility for the administration of medication and the management of health conditions, schools are often asked to assist with the provision of these services. Medication may be required for health reasons or to assist learning or modify behaviour. Once it has been established that a student has a need for medication and an alternative **cannot** be administered outside of school hours the school has a responsibility to provide for the administration of the medication. In some circumstances parents may be prepared or needed to assist with the administration of the medication or the health care procedure.

The responsibility for schools to administer medication arises from the duty of care that schools owe to their students and also by provisions in legislation in particular by the NSW Occupational Health and Safety Act, 2000 (the "NSW OHS Act") and the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA). "Disability under the DDA is very broadly defined and in almost every circumstance a student who requires the administration of prescribed medication will come within the definition.

The provision of health care either by the administration of medication or the carrying out of health procedures is an area that requires the cooperation of students, parents, school authorities and school staff. Carefully designed and communicated policy and procedures will assist schools to discharge their duty of care and enable parents to be actively engaged in the administration of medication to their child. Parents should be regularly informed of the school's policy in regard to the administration of medication.

Additionally, sensible policy can reduce the burden placed on school authorities obliged to administer medication. The Sample Policy on the Administration of Medication has been provided to assist schools develop a local policy on this issue. Alternatively, information on the administration of medication can be located on the CCH School Health and Safety website [www.cch.com.au](http://www.cch.com.au). All CCI school clients have a subscription to this product funded by Catholic Church Insurances. The CCH information coupled with these guidelines may be of assistance to schools choosing to develop a local policy.

### Privacy

Relevant information about the student's identity, medical condition, symptoms and the appropriate emergency response plan will need to be known by all staff that may be required to administer prescribed medication in an emergency. In some circumstances not only staff but other parents and students will need to know personal information in order for a student's health to be ensured. For example, if the student has a potential anaphylactic reaction to certain foods it may be proper for the canteen staff and volunteers to be made aware of the situation.

Parents and/or the student will often have concerns about the student's privacy in relation to the medical condition. Occasionally the Principal or teacher may be asked to restrict the dissemination of relevant information in a school. If a restriction on the sharing of relevant information potentially puts the student at risk of harm, privacy consideration must give way to safety consideration. However, **prior to any information being shared** the parent of the student and/or the student themselves must provide consent for the disclosure of the sensitive information.

### Routines

Routine is an important aspect of a school's prescribed medication policy. A good routine will ensure that as far as practicable:

- A location for administration is selected which is private and accessible
- Administration occurs at a regular time when privacy is easier to ensure and there is minimal disruption to school routine
- The student's identification, medication and dosage can be verified by a second person
- One person is responsible for administration of the medication
- A record is kept of the administration
- Safe hygiene practices are carried out
- Non compliance is communicated as soon as possible to the parents



## Reminders

Reminders are less likely to be needed once a good routine is established. However, there is a legal duty on schools to remind students with regard to taking medication. This duty will vary according to a number of factors such as the maturity of the child, the student's ability to remember and the dangers involved in failure to take the medication.

Reminders are likely to be needed for students in primary classes and older students who may have a disability. In these circumstances it may be necessary for the class teacher and the person administering the medication, usually administrative support staff, to give reminders to the student.

## Storage

Prescribed medication should be securely stored generally at one location. It may be necessary on larger sites to identify more than one location. Medication should be stored in accordance with any special requirements from information provided by the pharmacist or medical practitioner. In some circumstances students will need to carry their medication for immediate access. Asthma relievers (eg Ventolin) or adrenaline auto injectors (eg EpiPen) may need to be carried by the student or a nominated staff member. It is **essential** that EpiPens are always easily and quickly accessible to staff.

## Delivery of Medication to the School

Wherever possible medication should be provided to the school by parents on a daily basis. If the parent is unable to deliver the medication to the school it is advisable that a responsible person nominated by the parent deliver it. If a student is given the responsibility of delivering the medication to the designated area a proper assessment of the risk must be conducted. Factors to be taken into account when assessing the risk are:

- the maturity and capacity of the student
- parental consent
- any additional safety issue

Some research would suggest that without proper control measures prescribed medication like Ritalin and Dexamphetamine is sometimes passed from student to student

## Refusal to take Medication

While a school has a duty to do everything reasonable to facilitate the taking of medication, in circumstances where a child refuses to take the medication, the school should not force compliance unless the immediate health or safety of the student is at risk. Parents should be informed of the student's refusal at the earliest possible opportunity.

## Self-administration

Contemporary management of chronic health conditions encourages young people to administer their own medication, to recognise symptoms of their condition and to participate in the full range of activities offered by the school. Facilitation of self-administration, where appropriate, and with parental permission can greatly assist schools.

In these circumstances a school still has a duty to take reasonable steps to ensure that self-administration is carried out safely. This duty will vary with the maturity of the student, the student's ability/disability, relevant medical advice, the complexity of the administration procedure and the level of support needed in an emergency. Self-medication of medication may include:

- monitoring blood sugar levels and the injection of insulin for diabetes;
- inhaling medication such as "Ventolin" for asthma
- orally administering anti-convulsant medication for epilepsy and
- orally administering enzyme replacements for cystic fibrosis



Students self medicating should be involved in the development of safe procedures. Students approved to carry their own medication should demonstrate practices of secure storage of medication that may be potentially harmful to other students and safe disposal of injecting equipment.

In circumstances where a student is given permission to self medicate the school must take steps to make itself aware of the fact that a student is taking medication at school. Schools should regularly advise parents and students of the need to inform the school regarding students taking medication at school. With the exception of the use of asthma relievers self-administration of medication by Primary aged school students is **not appropriate**.

Recommended procedure for approval to self medicate would include:

- a written request with guidelines and procedures from the medical practitioner, for the student to be responsible for administering their own medication
- a determination by the principal that the student is capable of assuming this responsibility
- an agreement by the student and the school on where the medication is stored and where and how it is administered
- an undertaking by the student not to provide access to the medication to other students

**[Approval should never be given for the self-administration of Schedule 8 drugs, eg Ritalin, Dexamphetamines etc]**

### **Medication Register**

Good record keeping in relation to the administration of medication is essential. A medication register should be established and carefully maintained within the school providing the following information:

- Date
- Time
- Name of student
- Type of medication
- Dosage
- Name and signature of person administering medication

A sample is provided.

### **Changes to Prescribed Medication**

Principals find that from time to time changes will be made to the student's medication and the school is not formally informed. It is important that parents are made aware that they have a responsibility to inform the school of **any** changes of medication and that for each change the relevant forms need to be completed and forwarded to the school to be kept on file. See Form 5 *Notification of Changes to Medication*.

### **Action Plans**

A general **Action Plan** should be developed to assist personnel responsible for the administration of medication. The Action Plan should reflect the essential elements of the information that follows, as well as local circumstances such as the resources available at the school. In some circumstances where risks are higher and procedures are more complex it may be necessary for a health care procedure to be developed eg tube feeding.

### **Written Health Care Plans**

Most procedures for the administration of medication and management of health conditions can be adequately addressed by general guidelines. However, it is suggested that a **written health care plan** is devised for **individual students** in circumstances where there are known **potential emergency care needs** such as risk of anaphylaxis, diabetic shock or severe asthma or the need for health care procedures such as tube feeding, suctioning and clean intermittent catheterisation. Such a plan would be devised in consultation with parents, medical practitioners and staff who may be called upon to meet the student's needs.



Plans and procedures are more likely to be effective and better implemented where staff are involved in their development. Ideally school staff who are responsible for administering medication should be consulted at the various stages especially when:

- discussions are held with the parent and student
- plans and procedures are formulated and
- decisions are made on what training of staff will be necessary.

It is important that school staff responsible for administering medication are appropriately inserviced. Also staff should be given general periodic reminders of the school's policy guidelines for administering medication.

Suggestions for inclusions in a student's health care plan

- action needed to meet the health care needs of the student and the responsibilities of parties involved
- triggers, reactions, warning signs and symptoms of a possible emergency
- specific procedures needed to implement the care needed
- potential side effects of medication/procedure and their management
- limitations or guidelines for specific activities such as swimming, sport, outdoor education, camps and physical education
- name and phone number of the student's medical practitioner
- emergency phone number for ambulance, parents and in case parents are not contactable, an alternative contact
- precise information to be given to ambulance or other medical personnel
- an emergence response plan
- arrangements for variations to school routine, staff absences, excursions and transportation
- an assessment of any relevant risks and strategies for controlling or eliminating those risks
- a date for review

Designated first aid personnel in the school should be trained in the recognition and management of an emergency for students and staff with health conditions.

### **Antibiotics**

In the case of antibiotics, common sense dictates that it is not practical to require all of the Notification/Permission slips to be completed. Principals should use their discretion in this regard. Generally a written request from a parent to the school in relation to the administration of antibiotics will be sufficient. Staff should be aware that some antibiotics require refrigeration.

### **Over the Counter Medication**

Over the counter medication including analgesics or homeopathic preparations must not be administered by school staff unless a written request is received from the student's parent and is accompanied by written advice from a medical practitioner with the medication in the original labelled container. The exception is reliever puffers for the emergency treatment of asthma.

### **General Points to consider when developing a School Policy on the Administration of Medication**

- written permission of a parent/guardian
- medication kept in a central location (eg office of school secretary), clearly labelled with all relevant information for the child for whom it has been provided.
- medication register established and maintained within the school providing the following information: date, time, name of student, type of medication, dosage and the name of the person administering the medication.
- appropriate equipment for administration, eg medication measures, to be supplied by parents.
- prescribed medication supplied by parents in the original container, clearly marked with the student's name, the name of the drug, dosage, frequency of administration and prescribing doctor's name.



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- all prescribed medication kept under lock and key in the agreed central location within the school until the time of administration.
  - prescribed medication required by students accessible to them as and when required both at the school campus and whilst on excursions, sports days, camps etc.
  - after consultation nomination by the Principal of at least two members of staff who generally will be responsible for the administration of medication in the school.
  - a written procedure and good routines to ensure that students requiring prescribed medication attend at the appropriate time and place for their medication.

### **Necessary Documentation**

Because of the unique issues involved in the administration of medication by school staff and the strict nature of the responsibilities of involved adults, it is essential that the following documentation, samples of which are appended, is prepared and kept current:

A set of draft Notification/Permission slips has been prepared to assist schools in the administration of medication.

[Letter of Explanation to Parents \(refer Sample\)](#)  
[Medication Register \(refer Sample\)](#)

Forms 1 - 5 as specified below

[Form 1 Notification and Request by Parent/Guardian for the Administration of Medication During School Hours](#)

Form 2 Deed of Indemnity Removed

[Form 3 Medical Advice to School \(to be completed by prescribing Doctor\)](#)

[Form 4 School Acknowledgment of Request to Administer Medication](#)

[Form 5 Notification of Change of Medication.](#)

### **References:**

Catholic Education Commission, NSW *Student Safety in Schools Policy Guidelines, 1996*

CCH the Hands On Guide: *School Health & Safety, 2004*

Education Queensland *Administration of Routine and Emergency Medication and Management of Health Conditions, 2004*

**SAMPLE**

[on school letterhead]

## **Letter of Explanation to Parents**

Dear \_\_\_\_\_

Please find attached the forms that need to be completed so that medication can be administered to your child during the school day.

These forms have been designed to ensure the safety of your child and to protect the school staff who do not have medical training.

Forms 1 is to be completed by you. Form 3 is to be completed by the medical practitioner prescribing the medication. Once completed please return all three forms to the school.

I am aware that this may seem a complicated process but please be assured that the school will give you every assistance in this matter.

In this instance, and as an interim measure only, we will undertake to administer medication to your child without the required documentation until \_\_\_\_\_ (*date*).

Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of further assistance to you.

Yours sincerely,

Principal



**SAMPLE FORM 1**

[on school letterhead]

**NOTIFICATION AND REQUEST BY PARENT/GUARDIAN FOR THE  
ADMINISTRATION OF MEDICATION DURING SCHOOL HOURS**

*To be completed by parent or guardian*

I request that my child \_\_\_\_\_ (*full name of student*) \_\_\_\_\_ be allowed to take medication at school according to instructions from \_\_\_\_\_ (*full name of prescribing doctor*) \_\_\_\_\_ .

**Address of prescribing doctor:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Contact number:** \_\_\_\_\_

The medication has been prescribed for the following reason:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

I hereby give permission to the Principal to obtain relevant information from the prescribing doctor. I accept and agree to observe the conditions imposed by the school and understand and agree that it is my responsibility to inform the Principal of any changes involving the administration of the medicine.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*parent/guardian*

**SAMPLE FORM 2 (REMOVED)**

**SAMPLE FORM 3**

[on school letterhead]

**MEDICAL ADVICE TO SCHOOL**

*To be completed by prescribing doctor*

Student's full name: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Medical condition(s) of the child requiring regular treatment:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. Essential medication requiring administration during school hours:

**Medication Details**

Condition name	Medication name	Dosage	Time/s of administration	Special instructions	Self-administration (yes/no)

3. Recommended restrictions on participation in school activities (e.g. sport, use of tools or machinery):

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. Recommended procedure in crisis situation

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. Additional comments:

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Signature of prescribing doctor: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**SAMPLE FORM 4**

[on school letterhead]

**SCHOOL ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF REQUEST TO ADMINISTER MEDICATION**

date

Dear \_\_\_\_\_  
(name of parent/guardian)

I have considered your request to administer medication to your child \_\_\_\_\_  
(full name of student)

The school will render whatever aid is necessary to administer the medication, but it should be clearly understood that this aid is that of a lay person without medical training.

To comply with your request, the following conditions should be strictly observed:

1. It is your responsibility to provide the medication and equipment for its administration, and to ensure its immediate replenishment after use, or when it requires replacement.
2. The attached form must be completed before any changes to the medication and its administration can be implemented.
3. I understand that the information provided by you and the prescribing doctor may be discussed by the Principal with other members of the school staff.

Yours sincerely,

Principal



**SAMPLE FORM 5**

[on school letterhead]

**NOTIFICATION OF CHANGE TO MEDICATION**

*To be completed by parent/guardian*

Name of student: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of prescribing doctor: \_\_\_\_\_

Reason for change: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Medication Details**

<b>Condition name</b>	<b>Medication name</b>	<b>Dosage</b>	<b>Time/s of administration</b>	<b>Special instructions</b>	<b>Self-administration (yes/no)</b>

Signature of parent/guardian: \_\_\_\_\_ date: \_\_\_\_\_

**SAMPLE FORM 6**

**ADMINISTRATION OF MEDICATION TO STUDENTS REGISTER**

STUDENT NAME:			PHOTO IF DESIRED
CONDITION:			
DOCTOR:	PHONE NO:		
NAME OF MEDICATION:			
PHARMACIST:			PHONE NO:
METHOD OF ADMINISTERING THE MEDICATION:			
<b>DOSAGE</b>	<b>TIME</b>	<b>DATE</b>	<b>PERSON WHO ADMINISTERED MEDICATION</b>
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			
7.			
8.			
9.			
10.			
<i>See overpage for entries 11 – 40</i>			
<p><i>Note the name of the parent/guardian who requested the medication administration.</i></p> <p>Name: _____</p> <p>Relationship: _____ Contact phone no: _____</p> <p>Unused medication returned to carer:      YES / NO      <i>(circle one)</i></p>			

<b>DOSAGE</b>	<b>TIME</b>	<b>DATE</b>	<b>PERSON WHO ADMINISTERED MEDICATION</b>
11.			
12.			
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