PHARM TECH BASICS · ONE-PAGER

# Prescription Intake and Processing

What a prescription must carry, how it arrives, prescriber scope, the patient profile, NDC format, DAW codes, insurance claims and rejections, and days supply

30 sources + more detail
pharmtechbasics.com/sheets/pharm-prescription-intake.html
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## 1 What a prescription must carry

| ELEMENT | CONTROLLED SUBSTANCE (21 CFR 1306.05) | NON-CONTROLLED (USUALLY STATE LAW) |
|---|---|---|
| **Date issued** | Required; signed the same day | Required |
| **Patient full name and address** | Required (name and address) | Name required; address varies by state |
| **Drug name, strength, dosage form** | Required | Required |
| **Quantity and directions** | Required | Required |
| **Prescriber name and address** | Required | Required |
| **DEA registration number** | Required | Not needed |
| **Signature** | Manual on paper and faxes; EPCS app on e-prescriptions | Required on paper; state rules for e-prescriptions |
| **Refills** | Number authorized (rules in 1306.22); none for Schedule II (1306.12) | As authorized |

EXAM TIP The DEA number belongs on controlled prescriptions. The NPI (National Provider Identifier) is the HIPAA identifier for claims: the prescriber's NPI goes on the claim, and the pharmacy has its own.

## 2 How prescriptions arrive

| TYPE | FEDERAL RULE |
|---|---|
| **Written (paper)** | Ink, typed or printed; controlled ones manually signed. Medicaid requires a tamper-resistant pad for written (non-electronic) prescriptions |
| **Verbal (phone)** | Reduced promptly to writing by the pharmacist. Schedule III-V: prescriber or agent may call. Schedule II: emergency only, the prescriber personally, written copy within 7 days |
| **Fax** | Schedule III-V: a manually signed fax is the original. Schedule II: original must be presented before dispensing, except LTC residents, hospice patients and compounded IV or other parenteral narcotics |
| **Electronic (eRx)** | Controlled ones only through software that meets 21 CFR Part 1311 (EPCS); altered in transit means invalid |

SAFETY Who may take a new verbal order is state law. The federal texts name the pharmacist; unless your state expressly allows a technician to take it, hand the call to the pharmacist.

## 3 Prescriber authority and the completeness check

- A prescriber may prescribe only what the state license allows (and, for controlled drugs, with a DEA registration or exemption): a dentist for dental care, a podiatrist for the foot, a veterinarian for animals, a dermatologist for the skin.
- Out-of-scope orders (a dentist's blood pressure drug, a veterinarian writing for a person) go to the pharmacist. The technician does not decide.
- Check: right patient (second identifier such as date of birth), every element present, legible, quantity and directions make sense, signed, dated.
- Missing or unclear: tell the pharmacist; with permission, call the prescriber's office for it. Never guess, and never add a signature.
- Forgery flags (DEA): too neat, different inks or handwriting, photocopied, odd quantities or directions, directions written out in full.

## 4 Patient profile

- Demographics: name, address, phone, date of birth, gender
- Allergies and drug reactions (record the reaction, not just the drug)
- Conditions (disease states)
- Every medication and device, including OTC drugs, vitamins and herbals
- Insurance: every plan, primary first, with BIN, PCN, group, cardholder ID, person code

EXAM TIP OBRA '90 (42 CFR 456.705) sets the minimum Medicaid profile: demographics, disease states, allergies and reactions, a full medication and device list, and pharmacist comments.

## 5 NDC: the drug's ID number

*Segments: labeler (assigned by FDA), product (drug, strength, form), package (size and type). Add the zero to the short segment.*

| 10-DIGIT FORMAT | EXAMPLE (REAL LISTING) | 11-DIGIT BILLING (5-4-2) |
|---|---|---|
| **4-4-2** | 0088-2220-33 (Lantus 10 mL vial) | 00088-2220-33 |
| **5-3-2** | 23155-878-01 (lisinopril 10 mg, 100) | 23155-0878-01 |
| **5-4-1** | 68788-6920-1 (lisinopril 20 mg, 100) | 68788-6920-01 |

EXAM TIP An NDC does not mean FDA approval. A repackager uses its own labeler code. From March 7, 2033 FDA moves every NDC to 12 digits (6-4-2).

## 6 DAW codes (NCPDP field 408-D8)

| CODE | MEANING |
|---|---|
| **0** | No product selection indicated (generic dispensed, or no generic exists) |
| **1** | Substitution not allowed by prescriber (brand medically necessary) |
| **2** | Substitution allowed; patient requested brand |
| **3** | Substitution allowed; pharmacist selected product |
| **4** | Substitution allowed; generic not in stock |
| **5** | Substitution allowed; brand dispensed as generic |
| **6** | Override |
| **7** | Substitution not allowed; brand mandated by law |
| **8** | Substitution allowed; generic not available in marketplace |
| **9** | Substitution allowed; plan requests brand (older lists: Other) |

## 7 Claims, rejections and copays

| CARD FIELD | WHAT IT DOES |
|---|---|
| **BIN** | 6-digit number that routes the claim to the right processor |
| **PCN** | Processor control number: which plan or benefit at that processor |
| **Group** | The employer or plan group |
| **Cardholder ID** | The member's ID number |
| **Person code** | Which family member (as printed on the card) |

| REJECTION | WHAT THE TECHNICIAN DOES |
|---|---|
| **79 Refill too soon** | Check fill history and days supply; tell the patient the next date; overrides go through the pharmacist and plan |
| **75 Prior authorization** | Tell the patient; send the PA request to the prescriber |
| **70 / MR Not covered or non-formulary** | Check the plan's formulary for covered choices; pharmacist contacts prescriber |
| **76 Plan limits exceeded** | Check quantity and days supply against the limit |
| **88 DUR reject** | Pharmacist reviews and resolves |
| **41 Bill other payer** | Another plan is primary: bill it first |

EXAM TIP Coordination of benefits: bill the primary plan, then send what is left to the secondary. Medicaid pays last. Tiers: lower tier, lower copay (generics low, preferred brand middle, non-preferred higher, specialty highest).

## 8 Days supply

Days supply = quantity dispensed ÷ quantity used per day. For as-needed directions, use the most the directions allow.

1. Metformin 500 mg, 2 tablets twice daily, #120: 2 × 2 = 4 a day; 120 ÷ 4 = 30 days.
2. Lantus 10 mL vial (100 units/mL = 1,000 units), 20 units daily: 1,000 ÷ 20 = 50, but an opened vial lasts 28 days, so 28 days.

SAFETY A wrong days supply causes false refill-too-soon rejects, wrong DUR dose checks and a claim that misstates what was dispensed.



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