

Classification changes

The Misuse of Drugs (Classification and Presumption of Supply) Order 2022 will change the classification of some prescription medicines under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1975.

From their respective commencement dates, the new controlled drug classification for these medicines will take effect and all activities, including prescribing and dispensing, will be subject to the requirements under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1975 and the Misuse of Drugs Regulations 1977.

On 1 July 2023:

- fentanyl will be up-scheduled to a Class B1 controlled drug (from Class B3)
- zopiclone will be scheduled as a Class C5 controlled drug
- zolpidem will be scheduled as a Class C5 controlled drug.

On 1 October 2023:

- tramadol will be scheduled as a Class C2 controlled drug.

Midwives

Midwives can prescribe the following controlled drugs (opioids):

1. Pethidine
2. Morphine
3. Fentanyl
4. Tramadol

The Midwifery Council determines the Midwifery Scope of Practice in relation to prescription of opioid analgesia 1-3 to be for intrapartum use only. Midwives who do not have prescribing restrictions on their Scope of Practice may only prescribe opioids from that list, and there is an expectation the midwife has completed a Council-approved educational programme to enable them to do that*.

Individuals requiring opioid analgesia for other indications that sit outside of the Midwifery Scope of Practice should be assessed and referral made to the most appropriate health professional.

Fentanyl

There will be no changes to the prescribing requirements for fentanyl. The change in classification for fentanyl will provide authorities with increased powers in instances of suspected illicit manufacturing and supply activity. This is in response to largely international evidence which suggests that fentanyl is increasingly being abused.

Fentanyl may only be prescribed by a midwife practising in a secondary or tertiary

hospital setting with medical backup available. Fentanyl may not be prescribed for individuals in a primary birthing unit or an individual requiring transfer to another facility.

Tramadol

The classification of Tramadol will change to Class C2 from 1 October 2023. As a result, Tramadol does not need to be stored in a controlled drugs safe or recorded in controlled drugs register. The maximum supply that can be prescribed will be one month, and the prescription must be presented to a pharmacy within 4 days of writing.

Zopiclone, Zolpidem and Tramadol

The scheduling of these medicines under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1975 will have an impact on who can continue to prescribe these medicines, as well as the quantity and period of supply.

From 1 July 2023, midwives are not permitted to prescribe Zopiclone and Zolpidem.

Public Safety

Midwives should:

- prescribe opioids only after they have undertaken a comprehensive assessment of the birthing woman/person and baby/pepi, have an understanding of the birthing woman/person's history and needs, and are satisfied that prescribing these medications are in the birthing person and baby's best interests
- ensure maternal and fetal wellbeing after administration of an intrapartum opioid
- ensure they have a thorough understanding of the opioid, including contraindications, appropriate dose, route of administration, side effects, interactions, adverse reactions
- ensure that the birthing woman/person is informed and consents to the treatment being proposed
- consider consultation with the obstetric team if a birthing woman/person requires more than one intrapartum adult dose of a specific opioid administered, either by IV increments or IM administration or, if after administration, her pain is not controlled
- prescribe the opioids listed 1-3 above for an individual birthing person in the intrapartum period
- practise within their local hospital or maternity unit protocols and guidelines for prescription and administration of controlled drugs
- prescribe in accordance with accepted best practice guidelines [NMC User Guide 2021](#) (prescribing standards TBC)
- ensure they are able to manage any adverse reaction following prescription and administration of an opioid
- ensure documentation for the birthing woman/person and baby after birth is accurate and complete

*Pharmacology and Prescribing Course (for those midwives on Overseas Competence Programme or Category B and C Return to Practice Programme and Category C Return to New Zealand Practice Programme). New Zealand Graduates entered onto the Register from 2017 will have completed this education within their pre-registration programme.