

# Private Prescriptions

## What to Check, Question, and Challenge

Private prescriptions can be electronic or paper-based, and unlike NHS prescriptions, they come with different requirements and risks — especially when controlled drugs (CDs), high-risk medications, or lifestyle-related treatments are involved. Ensuring you know what to look for helps keep patients safe and protects you from dispensing errors, fraud, or legal issues.

### What to look for on a private prescription

Whether electronic or paper, a valid private prescription must include:

- Patient's full name, address, and age (if under 12)
- Prescriber's full name, address, and professional qualifications
- Date the prescription was signed
- Signature of the prescriber (must be handwritten on paper scripts). An 'advanced electronic signature' can be used to authorise an electronic prescription, but not for controlled drugs or veterinary prescriptions (see guidance in the link below from the Community Pharmacy Patient Safety Group)
- Details of the medicine: name, strength, form, dosage instructions, and quantity
- For Controlled Drugs (Schedules 2 & 3): use of a standardised form (FP10PCD in England) is required

### Top tips for spotting a forged or fraudulent prescription

- Poor formatting or layout: unusual fonts, inconsistent spacing, or misaligned text
- Too-good-to-be-true quantities: unusually large amounts or long courses
- Misspelled drug names or incorrect dosages
- Prescriber details that don't match any registered practitioner (look them up on official registers: GMC, GPhC, NMC)
- Paper feels 'off' – lightweight or thin, check for photocopies
- Reluctance or evasiveness from the patient when questioned
- Electronic prescriptions from sources not recognised or trusted – check that the prescriber is using a secure and compliant system

### Independent verification checks – protect against prescriber identity fraud

Never use the contact details on the prescription itself. If you need to verify a prescription:

- Look up the prescriber on official registers (e.g. **GMC, GPhC, NMC**)
- Use trusted contact information from NHS directories or the prescriber's official practice website
- Do not rely on email addresses or phone numbers printed on the script – these may be falsified

## Legal and patient safety due diligence

As part of your **legal and patient safety due diligence**, always check:

- Interactions and contraindications via **NCR** or **GMCR**
- Legitimacy of the prescriber and clinical appropriateness of the medication
- For lifestyle or high-risk medicines (e.g. Mounjaro and similar treatments), take a **curious and cautious approach** — assess indication, dose, duration, and whether patient monitoring is appropriate
- If in doubt, **contact the patient's GP** or the prescriber directly (using verified contact details)

## Patient safety comes first – What to do if you're unsure

- **Pause dispensing** – do not supply until you're satisfied everything is in order
- **Verify** the prescriber's registration and details
- **Contact** the prescriber via trusted contact channels
- **Report** concerns to the **CD Accountable Officer, NHS Greater Manchester**, or police if urgent
- **Escalate** to your Superintendent Pharmacist or Head Office
- **Document** the event in your pharmacy's safety log or incident reporting system

## Final tip: Stay alert, stay consistent

Make checking every private prescription part of your daily safety culture — not just the ones that “feel off.” Your **independent verification checks** and professional curiosity protect your patients, your registration, and your pharmacy.

## Supporting information

- Community Pharmacy Patient Safety Group: [Signature requirement guidance](#)
- Royal Pharmaceutical Society: [Medicines, Ethics & Practice](#)

