



# TAKING OR SENDING PBS MEDICINE OVERSEAS

Under the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS), the Australian Government subsidises the cost of prescription medicine, making it more affordable for Australians. In most cases patients pay only a small contribution towards the full cost of a PBS item.

Passengers sometimes illegally take or send PBS subsidised medicine to relatives or friends overseas. There is also a criminal motive where PBS medicine is sent overseas for resale at a profit on the black market.

## CAN I TAKE PBS MEDICINE OVERSEAS?

It is illegal to take PBS subsidised medicine out of Australia if it is not for the personal use of the exporter, or a person accompanying the exporter.

## WHAT IMPACT DOES THE ILLEGAL EXPORT OF PBS MEDICINE HAVE?

Exporting PBS medicine to people outside Australia leads to significant costs to both the Australian Government and the community.

It is also dangerous for people to take prescription medicine that has not been prescribed for them.

## HOW DOES ILLEGAL EXPORT OCCUR?

The illegal export of PBS medicine occurs most commonly via the post and by passengers carrying medicine in their luggage through airports. Customs has sophisticated technologies to detect drugs being illegally exported, such as physical checks, x-ray equipment and detector dogs.

## PENALTIES

Under the *National Health Act 1953* the maximum penalty for a person using, disposing or otherwise dealing with a PBS medicine which has been prescribed or supplied to them, in a way other than which it was meant, is two years imprisonment and/or a A\$5000 fine.

The maximum penalty for a person exporting above the designated quantity of a PBS medicine is two years imprisonment. The designated quantity can be calculated by your doctor in accordance with a formula set out in the Act.

## WHAT IS THE CORRECT WAY TO TAKE OR SEND PBS MEDICINE OVERSEAS?

When taking prescription medicine from Australia, a letter from a doctor or dentist should be carried stating who the medicine is for, the need for the medicine and the quantity supplied. You should also keep the medicine in its original packaging, showing where the medicine was dispensed, for whom the medicine was prescribed and how much was paid for the prescription. Passengers travelling with medication should also contact the embassy of the destination country to ensure the medicine is legal in that country.

It is not illegal to take or send from Australia the following medicine:

- 'over-the-counter' items
- prescription medicine that has **not** been subsidised by the PBS or
- PBS medicine that is for the personal use of the exporter or someone travelling with the exporter.

A PBS Medicine Export Declaration form should be completed and carried or sent with the medicine in the following instances:

- when carrying, posting or sending medicine that is not prescription medicine or not subsidised by the PBS
- when it has not been possible to obtain a doctor's letter for PBS subsidised medicine for the personal use of the exporter or a person accompanying the exporter.

The form is available on the Medicare Australia website, [www.medicareaustralia.gov.au](http://www.medicareaustralia.gov.au), or from Customs regional offices and airport staff.

For more information contact Medicare Australia's Travelling with PBS Medicine Enquiry Line on 1800 500 147.

The Customs Hotline (1800 06 1800) is a reliable method to notify Customs if you suspect the illegal export of PBS medicine.

For more information on any Customs matter, contact the Customs Information and Support Centre on 1300 363 263 or email [information@customs.gov.au](mailto:information@customs.gov.au) or browse the website [www.customs.gov.au](http://www.customs.gov.au)