



Guide for service users seeking to obtain NHS bridging prescriptions

This is a fact sheet for service users wishing to obtain emergency medication such as hormone therapy or puberty blockers from NHS GPs.

This information itself aims only to provide service users with a clear explanation of GP's duties to assist their patients in accessing bridging prescriptions.

Please note that nothing in this Guide constitutes legal advice.

There are links throughout this Guide that lead to any external guidance referred to.

Your GP's Duties

- **Your GP [may not](#) simply refuse treatment.**
- The Good Practice [guide](#) from the General Medical Council states that unlicensed medications (like those for hormone therapy) can be prescribed outside the terms of the licence, '*where this is necessary to meet the specific needs of the patient, and where there is no suitably licensed medicine that will meet the patient's needs*'.
- Your GP has a [duty](#) to collaborate with the Gender Identity Clinic or an experienced gender specialist, in order to 'provide effective and timely treatment for ... trans patients'; this includes prescribing the hormones or puberty blockers.
- Your GP can only not follow the specialist's recommendations if they are not satisfied that they serve the patient's needs.
- Your GP, if they are uncertain about being able to prescribe, should seek further information or advice from another colleague and make arrangements for the continuation of care, see [point 43 of the GMC Prescribing Guidance](#).

October 2020

- GPs have a duty under the General Medical Council's Good Practice [guide](#) to:
 - keep themselves informed about the medicines that are prescribed for the patient;
 - be able to recognise serious and frequently occurring adverse side effects;
 - make sure appropriate clinical monitoring arrangements are in place and that the patient and healthcare professionals involved understand them; and
 - keep up to date with relevant guidance on the use of the medicines and on the management of the patient's condition.

Bridging Prescriptions

- Service users may be considering to self-medicate with unregulated products bought online without prior medical assessment or supervision. This is strictly not a recommended practice.
- Bridging prescriptions are there for GPs to reduce the risk of harm by prescribing the medication in order to stop patients from turning to these unregulated products or before they have been properly prescribed by a specialist.
- The prescription [must](#) be judged by the GP to be of 'overall benefit to [the] patient'.
- The criteria for a bridging prescription is that:
 - the patient is already self-prescribing or seems highly likely to self-prescribe from an unregulated source (over the internet or otherwise on the black market);
 - the bridging prescription is intended to mitigate a risk of self-harm or suicide; and
 - the doctor has sought the advice of an experienced gender specialist and prescribes the lowest acceptable dose in the circumstances.
- The Royal College of Psychiatrists [good practice guidelines](#) also support this approach:

"...the GP or other medical practitioner involved in the patient's care may prescribe 'bridging' endocrine treatments as part of a holding and harm reduction strategy while the patient awaits specialised endocrinology or other gender identity treatment and/or confirmation of hormone prescription elsewhere or from patient records" (page 25) and, "A bridging prescription may be appropriate, and blood tests and health checks are undertaken to screen for contraindications" (page 28).

My GP is still refusing to give me a bridging prescription

- If you are struggling to access a bridging prescription, you may make a complaint to the Clinical Commissioning Group ('CCG') that the GP's surgery is a part of.
- The Clinical Commissioning Group Safeguarding lead could intervene with GPs and pharmacies to ensure harm reduction is being practiced in the best interests of the child through bridging prescriptions. Clinical Commissioning Groups are groups of GP surgeries that operate in the same way.

To contact your Clinical Commissioning Group, see this [link](#) to locate the one that your GP surgery is under.

For further support or guidance please contact Legal@Mermaidsuk.org.uk