

FAQs | Changes to prescribing lengths

What is changing and when?

From early 2026, GPs will be able to prescribe some medicines for up to 12 months, instead of the current three. This national change aims to make it easier for people to access their regular medicines – especially if they live rurally or find it hard to get appointments.

Does this mean I'll automatically get a 12-month prescription?

Not necessarily because every person's health is different. It depends on your health situation, the medicines you take, and how stable your condition is. Your GP will decide with you what's safe and appropriate. Some people will still need shorter prescriptions so that their health can be checked more often. It's about finding the safest option for you, not applying one rule for everyone.

Will this mean fewer GP and pharmacy visits?

Possibly – but we'll still want to see you when needed. Regular reviews are important to check your medicine is working, that you're not having side effects, and to pick up early signs of other health issues. Safety and continuity of care come first.

If you do receive a 12-month prescription, the medicine will be dispensed in three-monthly instalments, meaning you'll still need to visit the same pharmacy every three months to collect the next round of your medication, and pay any co-payment fees (e.g. \$5).

Will this save me money on appointments or prescriptions?

For some people, yes. Having fewer prescription renewals might mean fewer GP visits. But if regular check-ups are needed for your condition, those appointments remain important to keep you healthy long-term.

How does this affect people who find it hard to see their GP?

For some, a 12-month prescription might make things easier. But less frequent contact can also mean fewer chances to catch problems early. That's why decisions are made case-by-case, taking into account your personal situation and any barriers you face to care.

Can all medicines be prescribed for 12 months?

No. Some medicines are higher risk or require regular monitoring, so they'll stay on shorter prescribing cycles. Your GP or pharmacist will explain if your medicines fall into that category.

What if I run out of my medicine before the 12 months are up what should I do?

If you ever have trouble with supply or dosage, contact your GP or pharmacist right away. We'll make sure you have what you need safely.

What if I'm worried about seeing my GP less often?

You'll still be able to discuss your health and medicines whenever you need to. The aim is to make medicine access easier – not reduce your care. Your GP team is here to make sure you're safe and supported.



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Te Whare Tohu Rata o Aotearoa