

Medication at school



Some students have short-term illnesses or ongoing medical conditions that require them to take medication during the school day. In many cases, these students need help from school staff to administer their medication.

Whether in the state or non-state sector, schools generally have guidelines about the forms of assistance they can provide and what is required from parents.

‘Ultimately, parents are responsible for managing their children’s medical conditions, including administering their medication,’ said the Coordinator of Education Queensland’s Health Outcomes Team, Jacky Dawson. ‘However, teachers recognise that they have a role to play in ensuring safe practices are followed on the occasions when students need to take medication at school.’

The Association of Independent Schools of Queensland Executive Director Dr John Roulston said the laws on the accreditation of non-state schools require all independent schools to have policies to safeguard student welfare.

‘Our schools take this requirement seriously, and each school has its own policy for the safe administration of medication,’ he said.

‘Parents should check with the principal of their child’s school about procedures to follow if they are asking staff to supervise the administration of medication. These procedures are designed to support safe practices, both for the student concerned and other students at the school.’

Prescribed medication

For prescribed medication, schools in both the state and non-state sectors generally recommend the following actions:

- Make a request in writing for the school to administer the medication. Give details of any request and/or guidelines from medical practitioners about the medication, including possible side effects or adverse reactions.
- Provide the medication in the original container, labelled by a health-care professional or pharmacist, to the staff member responsible for administering it.
- Make sure the label on the medication shows the name of the student, name of the drug and name of the medical practitioner prescribing it, as well as the use-by date, dosage and time to be taken.
- Advise the school in writing, and collect the medication, when it is no longer required at school.

Over-the-counter medication

Similar guidelines usually apply to over-the-counter medication, including analgesics and herbal medicines. School staff are not able to administer such medication unless they receive a written request from parents, written approval from a medical practitioner, and the medication in the original labelled container.

Self-administering of medication

Some students may have approval from their doctor, their parents and the principal to administer their own medication (for example, inhale Ventolin for asthma; inject insulin for diabetes). Students who self-administer must follow safe practices for carrying medication that may be potentially harmful to other students and for disposing of any associated equipment, such as injecting equipment for insulin. Parents should discuss and arrange safety practices and procedures with their children and the school principal. ■