

Entering Australia with Medication
(Prepared by ACBPS for AIDS 2014 delegates – 13 May 2014)

There are rules about bringing medicines and medical devices into Australia. Some medicines require permission to be granted by the relevant Australian Government agency or meet other conditions such as a letter and prescription from a medical practitioner before they can be brought into Australia by individuals.

Different countries have different laws about what substances are considered to be medicines. Substances that are controlled in Australia may be easily available in another country. If in doubt, it is recommended you declare your medication in Australia.

Contents

What medication is permitted?	1
What do I need to do?	2
What happens when you declare?	2
Safer Sex and Harm Reduction education materials	3
Case Studies.....	4
Antiretrovirals.....	4
Opioid substitution therapy	4
Prescription Xanax (alprazolam).....	5
Treatment for Hepatitis B.....	5
Treatment for Hepatitis C.....	6
Hypodermic Needles	6
Gender reassignment medications	6
Anabolic/androgenic substances	7

What medication is permitted?

If you want to bring medicines or medical devices into Australia for personal use you must check:

- ✓ If it can be brought in under the [Traveller's exemption](#).
- ✓ If you need an [import permit](#) or other authority such as a letter from your doctor or a copy of your prescription to bring in the medicine because it contains a substance subject to the *Customs (Prohibited Imports) Regulations 1956*.
- ✓ The special requirements for importing [injections containing material of human or animal origin \(except insulin\)](#).
- ✓ Any other [quarantine or customs restrictions](#)

Most 'Prescription Only Medicine' is controlled on import under the *Therapeutic Goods Act 1989* which allows travellers to bring in medication for their personal use under the traveller's exemption. Most¹ commonly-prescribed medicines and medical devices may be brought into Australia under the Traveller's exemption.

Some commonly-prescribed medicines are considered to be [prohibited substances](#), but can still be brought into Australia under an exemption that allows a passenger to bring in

¹ these include: medications that lower blood cholesterol, blood pressure, blood glucose and/or gastric acid; contraception medications (birth control); blood glucose monitoring devices.

personal medication in their accompanied baggage without an import permit providing the conditions of the 'Traveller's Exemption' are met (see below). These medications include:

- antibiotics
- opioid analgesics (painkillers)
- OST medication
- medications to aid sleep (sedatives).

Please note that the passenger exemption does not extend to drugs and medicines listed in Schedule 8 of the *Customs (Prohibited Imports) Regulations 1956* which includes anabolic and androgenic steroids. See further information [here](#).

What do I need to do?

In order to bring in medicines or medical devices under the Traveller's exemption or the Passenger exemption the following conditions must be met:

- if it is a prescription medicine, you must have a prescription, or written authorization, showing that the medicine or medical device is for the treatment of you or another passenger under your care who is travelling with you on the same flight or voyage.
- if the medicine contains a [prohibited substance](#) under the *Customs (Prohibited Imports) Regulations 1956*, you must have a prescription, or letter from your doctor written in English to confirm that the medicine was prescribed to you by a medical practitioner for the treatment of a medical condition or that of another passenger in your care.
- where possible, keep the medicines or medical devices in their original packaging with any dispensing labels intact.
- the quantity brought in must not exceed 3 months' supply at the maximum dose recommended by the manufacturer.
- the medicines or medical devices you bring into Australia must not be sold or supplied to any other person.
- you must ensure that you comply with the requirements of the [Australian Customs and Border Protection Service](#) in relation to declaring medicines or medical devices you are bringing into Australia.

Please carry these medicines and medical devices in your hand luggage so you have access to them if needed. It also means you avoid any potential problems if your checked in luggage goes missing.

What happens when you declare?

If you are bringing in medicines that are considered to be drugs of abuse, misuse or dependence such as opioid based medication or some over the counter medication, you should answer 'yes' to the question on the Australian Incoming Passenger card: *Are you bringing into Australia goods that may be prohibited or subject to restrictions, such as medicines, steroids, illegal pornography, firearms, weapons or illicit drugs?*

This means that you are declaring the medication to the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service. An officer of the Service will ask to see the medications and the letter from your doctor and/or prescription. Providing you have met the conditions of the passenger exemption and there are no additional concerns, you will be 'cleared' from 'Customs'.

STEPPING UP THE PACE

When leaving Australia, please take your medicines and medical devices with you. Where possible, keep them in their original packaging, with any dispensing labels intact. Any documents you have relating to importing the medicines or medical devices must be available for inspection upon departure.

Guidance is provided in the [case studies](#) below for the most common medication.

More information on customs and arriving in Australia is available [here](#).

If you have questions about access opioid substitution therapy or injecting equipment in Australia, see the harm reduction factsheet [here](#).

Safer Sex and Harm Reduction education materials

If your materials are being used for genuine educational purposes, or advocacy purposes there should not be an issue bringing these into Australia. Documentation from your organization supporting your travel and the carriage of these materials is also advisable.

Please note that objectionable material, such as material depicting sexualized violence, is prohibited on import.

Case Studies

Antiretrovirals

- *I am HIV positive and am taking enough ARV for my stay in Melbourne, about 10 days' supply.*

Most common ARVs² can be brought into Australia under the traveller's exemption. Please place your drugs in your hand luggage, bringing only the amount of drugs you require (less than 3 months' supply) and keep medication in its original packages if possible.

When you arrive in Australia, you will be asked to complete an 'Incoming Passenger's Card'. This card will ask if you are carrying: *Goods that may be prohibited or subject to restrictions, such as medicines, steroids, firearms, weapons of any kind or illicit drugs?*
Yes No

- If you are only carry your ARVs with you, and no other medicine, steroids, firearms, weapons of any kind or illicit drugs, you may tick "no" for this question.
- If you are unsure what to do, tick "yes" and declare (tell the customs officer you have this) your medication.

Opioid substitution therapy

- *I have 10 day dose of methadone with me, or a 'take away' dose of methadone.*

Most common opioid substitution drugs³ can be brought into Australia under the passenger exemption; however as these maybe considered drugs of abuse, misuse or dependence under the *Customs (Prohibited Imports) Regulations 1956* ([prohibited substances](#)) you **MUST** declare them when you enter the country.

To bring this type of medication into Australia, carry a copy of your prescription and/or a letter of authorisation (written in English) from your doctor with you, carry your medication in your hand luggage, bringing only the amount of drugs you require (must be less than a 3 months supply) and keep medication in its original packages if possible.

When you arrive in Australia, you will be asked to complete an 'Incoming Passenger's Card'. This card will ask if you are carrying: *Goods that may be prohibited or subject to restrictions, such as medicines, steroids, firearms, weapons of any kind or illicit drugs?*
Yes No

- If you are carrying your methadone with you, you should tick "yes" for this question.
- If you are unsure what to do, tick "yes" and declare (tell the customs officer you have this) your medication.

² ARV (anti-viral) medication includes the brand names Tenofovir, Emtricitabine, Abacavir, Lamivudine, Zidovudine (AZT), Lamivudine (3TC), Efavirenz (EFV). Nevirapine (NVP).

³ The same process should be followed if you are carrying: Buprenorphine (Subutex, Butrans, Buprenex, Suboxone, Zubsolv) or Prescription Morphine.

If you have been prescribed any other type of opioid substitution therapy not outlined here, please seek further advice from the Drug Control Section of the Australian Department of Health at tmu@health.gov.au to ascertain if you can travel with this drug.

Prescription Xanax (alprazolam)

➤ *I will have with me prescribed Xanax for the 10 days I'm in Melbourne.*

If you have a prescription for Xanax you may bring your personal dose with you to Australia (supply for be less than 3 months) under the the passenger exemption, however as this is prohibited under the Customs (Prohibited Imports) Regulations 1956 ([prohibited substances](#)) you **MUST** declare it when you enter the country.

To bring this type of medication into Australia, carry a copy of your prescription and/or a letter of authorisation (written in English) from your doctor with you, carry your medication in your hand luggage, bringing only the amount of drugs you require (must be less than a 3 months supply) and keep medication in its original packages if possible.

When you arrive in Australia, you will be asked to complete an 'Incoming passenger's Card'. This card will ask if you are carrying: *Goods that may be prohibited or subject to restrictions, such as medicines, steroids, firearms, weapons of any kind or illicit drugs?*
Yes No

- If you are carrying your Xanax with you, you should tick "yes" for this question.
- If you are unsure what to do, tick "yes" and declare (tell the customs officer about) your medication.

Treatment for Hepatitis B

The common treatments for Hep B are Peginterferon, Lamivudine and Adefovir (ADV) can be brought into Australia under the traveller's exemption under the Therapeutic Goods Act 1989.

To bring this type of medication into Australia, carry a copy of your prescription and/or a letter of authorisation from your doctor (written in English) with you, carry your medication in your hand luggage, bringing only the amount of drugs you require (must be less than a 3 months supply) and keep medication in its original packages if possible.

When you arrive in Australia, you will be asked to complete an 'Incoming Passenger's Card'. This card will ask if you are carrying: *Goods that may be prohibited or subject to restrictions, such as medicines, steroids, firearms, weapons of any kind or illicit drugs?*
Yes No

- If you are only carry your treatment for Hep B with you, and no other medicine, steroids, firearms, weapons of any kind or illicit drugs, you may tick "no" for this question.
- If you are unsure what to do, tick "yes" and declare (tell the customs officer you have this) your medication.

Treatment for Hepatitis C

The common treatments for Hep C are Peginterferon, ribavirin, telaprevir and boceprevir can be brought into Australia under the traveller's exemption under the Therapeutic Goods Act 1989.

To bring this type of medication into Australia, carry a copy of your prescription or a letter of authorisation from your doctor (written in English) with you, carry your medication in your hand luggage, bringing only the amount of drugs you require (must be less than a 3 months supply) and keep medication in its original packages if possible.

When you arrive in Australia, you will be asked to complete an 'Incoming Passenger's Card'. This card will ask if you are carrying: *Goods that may be prohibited or subject to restrictions, such as medicines, steroids, firearms, weapons of any kind or illicit drugs?*
Yes No

- If you are only carry your treatment for Hep C with you, and no other medicine, steroids, firearms, weapons of any kind or illicit drugs, you may tick "no" for this question.
- If you are unsure what to do, tick "yes" and declare (tell the customs officer you have this) your medication.

Hypodermic Needles

Traveling with hypodermic needles is prohibited unless it is medically necessary for you to carry them.

Injecting equipment is widely available in Australia and easy to access, see harm reduction FAQs [here](#).

If you do need to carry hypodermic needles, you should have proof that you require them, such as a letter from your doctor or clinic, written in English, and they should be kept (in your hand luggage) with the medication they will be used to administer.

When you arrive in Australia, you will be asked to complete an 'Incoming Passenger's Card'. This card will ask if you are carrying: *Goods that may be prohibited or subject to restrictions, such as medicines, steroids, firearms, weapons of any kind or illicit drugs?*
Yes No

- If you are carrying your hypodermic needles with you, you should tick "yes" for this question.
- If you are unsure what to do, tick "yes" and declare (tell the customs officer about) your medication.

Gender reassignment medications

- *I am a transgendered person and will have with me prescribed hormone medication for the 10 days I'm in Melbourne.*

STEPPING UP THE PACE

If you have a prescription for gender reassignment medication, you may bring your personal dose with you to Australia (supply for be less than 3 months) under the the passengers exemption, however as these are [prohibited substances](#) under the *Customs (Prohibited Imports) Regulations 1956* and can be misused as performance enhancing drugs, you **MUST** declare them when you enter the country.

To bring this type of medication into Australia, carry a copy of your prescription or a letter of authorisation from your doctor (written in English) with you, carry your medication in your hand luggage, bringing only the amount of drugs you require (must be less than a 3 months supply) and keep medication in its original packages if possible.

When you arrive in Australia, you will be asked to complete an 'Incoming passenger's Card'. This card will ask if you are carrying: *Goods that may be prohibited or subject to restrictions, such as medicines, steroids, firearms, weapons of any kind or illicit drugs?*
Yes No

- If you are carrying your medication with you, you should tick "yes" for this question.
- If you are unsure what to do, tick "yes" and declare (tell the customs officer about) your medication.

Anabolic/androgenic substances

If you need to travel with anabolic/androgenic substances, you will need to obtain a permit before entering Australia. To apply for a permit you need to provide the Office of Chemical Safety with a signed letter on official letterhead from your prescribing doctor, detailing:

- prescribing doctors name;
- prescribing doctors address, telephone, fax and email contact details;
- patient's full name and date of birth;
- name of medicine, including active drug substance;
- strength of medicine;
- dosage regime, and;
- providing a statement that the named patient has been prescribed the specified medicine to treat an ongoing medical condition.

You should also provide:

- your planned arrival and departure dates in Australia and the country/s you are travelling from and returning to, and;
- your full contact details.

Requests for permits should be sent to the Office of Chemical Safety at tmu@health.gov.au.

If you are on medication that is not covered in this factsheet please seek advice from the Office of Chemical Safety at tmu@health.gov.au.