



Safes for storing Schedule 8 medicines

This information is applicable to any healthcare facility, business or organisation that stores Schedule 8 medicines in readiness for supply or use, such as:

- Pharmacies
- Medical practices
- Day surgeries
- Hospitals
- Residential care facilities
- Dental practices
- Veterinary clinics and hospitals, including mobile vets
- Remote work sites
- Businesses that wholesale Schedule 8 medicines.

Schedule 8 (S8) medicines must be stored in a safe. Depending on the amount of S8 medicines stored, either a small or large safe is required. Where larger amounts of S8 medicines are stored, movement detectors covering the safe are required. A safe is not required in hospital wards where nurses will be present 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

S8 medicine storage must be in an area that is not accessible to the public.

Consumers do not have to store their own S8 medicines in a safe. Secure storage of “patient’s own” S8 medicines is recommended in residential care facilities and hospitals.

Schedule 8 storage in hospital wards

If a hospital ward is closed for certain periods, such as overnight or during weekends, a safe must be used.

If the ward operates continuously and always has nurses present, a lockable hardwood or metal cupboard can be used. The cupboard must be securely fixed to a wall or floor.

Schedule 8 storage in pharmacies (including public hospitals)

Pharmacies must have a large safe, located in an area that is not accessible to the public and covered by a continuously monitored detection device.

When a pharmacist is on site, a lockable hardwood or metal cupboard or drawer can be used.

When can a small safe be used?

When 500 or less human doses of S8 medicines are being stored, a small safe can be used. If more than 250 human doses are stored, the safe must be covered by continuously monitored movement detectors (compliant with AS 2201.3 :1991).

When is a large safe required?

When more than 500 human doses are stored, a large safe is required. The safe must be covered by continuously monitored movement detectors (compliant with AS 2201.3:1991). Pharmacies always require a large safe. Wholesalers will usually need a strongroom (meeting resistance grade VII of AS 3809:1998).

How to calculate the number of doses to determine the size of safe required

Calculations use human doses because the controls over S8 medicines aim to reduce the risk of diversion and misuse by humans.

Where the medicine is available in divided doses, one dose is simply one tablet, one capsule or one ampoule.

For oral liquids or veterinary multi-dose injection vials, you will need to calculate the total number of doses in the bottle or vial. The total quantity of S8 medicine in the bottle or vial should be divided by the smallest equivalent human dose of the medicine. Examples are as follows:

Preparation	Size of bottle or vial	Smallest human dose	Total number of doses
Morphine mixture 2 mg per mL	200 mL	5 mg	80
Morphine mixture 5 mg per mL	200 mL	5 mg	200
Oxycodone mixture 1 mg per mL	250 mL	5 mg	50
Hydromorphone mixture 1 mg per mL	473 mL	2 mg	237
Codeine linctus 5 mg per mL	100 mL	5 mL	20
Buprenorphine injection 300 mcg per mL	10 mL	300 mcg	10
Butorphanol injection 10 mg per mL	10 mL	2 mg	50
Ketamine injection 100 mg per mL	50 mL	200 mg	25
Methadone injection 10 mg per mL	20 mL	10 mg	20

What are the specifications for a small safe?

A small safe either:

- meets resistance grading I of AS 3809:1998 Safes and strongrooms or
- meets the specifications in Schedule 3 of the Medicines and Poisons Regulations 2016.

Safe specifications include:

- cabinet and door made from solid steel plate at least 10 mm thick or a steel skin with concrete fill at least 50 mm thick
- continuous welding of all joints
- door fitted flush to cabinet with a maximum 1.5 mm clearance when closed
- hinge system that does not allow the door to open if the hinge is removed

- 6 lever key lock, 4 wheel combination lock or digital lock providing equivalent security

The safe must be securely bolted directly to a concrete floor or concrete or brick wall. Safes cannot be bolted to stands, shelves or plinths that are fixed to the floor or wall. Wall studs or floor joists can be used if there is no concrete or brick floor or wall available. The bolts used should be four masonry anchors such as Loxin or Dyna Bolts, measuring at least 12 mm (width) by 50 mm (length).

Safes described as drug or medicine safes and supplied by specialist safe suppliers and locksmiths will usually meet the requirements. Safes available from general hardware and office supply stores will generally not meet the requirements.

What are the specifications for a large safe?

A large safe either:

- meets resistance grading II of AS 3809:1998 Safes and strongrooms or
- meets the specifications in Schedule 3 of the Medicines and Poisons Regulations 2016.

Safe specifications additional to small safes include:

- minimum weight of at least 250 kg
- door must be closed by at least 2 locking bolts at least 32 mm in diameter
- mounting must be directly to a concrete floor with a bolt of at least 16 mm in diameter. If the safe weighs more than 1 tonne, bolting is not required.
- installation must be by a licensed safe installer.

Storing doctor's bag supplies

Doctor's bag S8 medicines left at the surgery when it is closed must be stored in a safe.

When attending patients at home, the S8 medicines must be in the doctor's possession and not left in the doctor's vehicle.

Storing emergency veterinary supplies

It is recommended that mobile vets fit a locked container to the body of their vehicle for the transport of veterinary S8 drugs. Where possible, the quantity of drugs carried should be limited to one day's requirements.

Drugs should not be left in vehicles overnight, even if the vehicle is garaged.

For more information

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