

## **NZCOM CONSENSUS STATEMENT**

### ***Prescribing Guidelines***

*This Consensus Statement was ratified at AGM 25 August 1995*

*Statement updated 2002*

*References updated 2002, 2009*

The 1990 amendment to the Medicines Act allows midwives to prescribe prescription medicines.

There is no defined list of medicines a midwife may prescribe, but the limits as to when a midwife can prescribe are set out in an amendment to Regulation 39 of the Medicines Regulations 1984. It states that; *“no registered midwife shall prescribe any prescription of medicine otherwise than for antenatal, intra partum, and postnatal care”*. This is generally accepted as covering a period up to six weeks after the birth of the baby.

The NZCOM expects that midwives prescribe within their scope of practice and are competent to prescribe for conditions commonly associated with uncomplicated pregnancy, labour, birth and postnatal period.

The NZCOM expects midwives to have knowledge regarding the effects, side effects, interactions and contra-indications of the drugs prescribed. The NZCOM expects midwives to prescribe within the level of their knowledge and expertise.

Midwives are not expected to prescribe for all antenatal, labour, birth and postnatal situations.

Prescribing by midwives would not include medicines for the treatment of underlying medical conditions such as hypertension and asthma.

Midwives are expected to recognise and action any knowledge deficit they may have and to take part in an education programme to rectify this.

It would be appropriate for a midwife to prescribe medicines such as vitamins and minerals (including vitamin K and iron), antipruritics, local anaesthetics, contraceptives, antibiotics, anti-bacterials, vaccinations, immuno-globulin, antifungal agents, oxytocics, antiemetics, antacids, the controlled drug pethidine and its antagonist, monitoring and diagnostic agents (eg urine testing equipment), lubricants and IV fluids.

As midwifery care is based on individual assessment of a woman's health needs this list is not exhaustive and is primarily a guideline for usual practice.

The Misuse of Drugs Act 1975 was also amended to allow midwives to prescribe pethidine and regulates the manner in which it may be prescribed.

The College strongly discourages the use of analgesics or sedatives during labour at home. The necessity for these types of medications is an indication to transfer to hospital. If women are birthing at home the inappropriateness of such medications should be discussed.

If narcotics are prescribed for use in labour, the midwife must know and discuss with the woman the actions and possible side effects of the medication. The midwife must have the equipment and skills necessary to cope with the effects of this medication.

## References

Title: New Ethicals Catalogue

Source: Adis International, Private Bag 65901, Auckland 10

- The New Ethicals Catalogue is published three times a year providing minimum basic information essential for routine prescribing including contraindications, important precautions, adverse reactions and drug interactions about every brand name pharmaceutical product available in New Zealand.

Title: New Ethicals Compendium

Source: Adis International, Private Bag 65901, Auckland 10

- The New Ethicals Compendium is designed to be used in conjunction with the New Ethicals Catalogue. Product entries in the Catalogue have been cross-referenced to the New Ethicals Compendium where detailed information can be found.

Title: Drugs safety in Pregnancy

Source: <http://www.druginformation.co.nz/breastfeeding.htm>

Title: Drug Safety in Lactation

Source: <http://www.druginformation.co.nz/breastfeeding.htm>

Title: Medicine Data Sheets

Source: Medsafe. [www.medsafe.govt.nz](http://www.medsafe.govt.nz)

Title: Drugs Vitamins and Minerals in Pregnancy

Source: Henry, Anne. Feldhausen, Jill. 1989

Fisher Books, Tucson, USA

ISBN 1-55561-017-X

- Information regarding medications, vitamins, minerals and other substances women may be taking or exposed to during pregnancy and lactation. The chart format provides information on common prescription and non-prescription drugs, safe and toxic doses, adverse effects on the woman, the unborn baby, the newborn and effects during breastfeeding.

Title: New Zealand Pharmaceutical Schedule

Source: Pharmaceutical Management Agency Ltd, PO Box 10-254, Wellington

- The Schedule provides prescribers and dispensers with the list of subsidised pharmaceuticals that can be prescribed and the conditions applying to them.

Title: Midwives Handbook for Practice, 2008

Source: NZCOM, PO Box 21 106, Christchurch.

The purpose of New Zealand College of Midwives Consensus Statements is to provide women, midwives and the maternity services with the profession's position on any given situation. The guidelines are designed to educate and support best practice.

All position statements are regularly reviewed and updated in line with evidence-based practice.