

GP PRE-DEPARTURE APPOINTMENT GUIDE

Preparing for Remote & Extended Caravan Travel in Australia • 2026 Edition



Book a dedicated pre-trip appointment at least 4–6 weeks before departure.

A standard 10-minute consult is rarely enough — ask for a longer appointment when booking and mention you are planning an extended remote trip.

6+ WEEKS OUT

Book appointment. Start medication stocktake. Check passport validity if travelling overseas.

4–6 WEEKS OUT

Attend GP appointment. Obtain letters, permits, prescriptions, and referrals.

1–2 WEEKS OUT

Collect prescriptions from pharmacy. Confirm cold chain storage. Final medication check.

SECTION 1 — Bring to Your Appointment

Documents & Cards

- ☐ Medicare card and any concession / DVA card
- ☐ Private health insurance card
- ☐ List of all current medications (name, dose, frequency)
- ☐ Names of any specialists currently managing your care
- ☐ Recent test results or specialist letters (if relevant)

Trip Information

- ☐ Planned departure and return dates
- ☐ Route overview — states/territories, remote areas
- ☐ Estimated maximum distance from a town or hospital
- ☐ Names of travel companions and their medical conditions
- ☐ Completed Pre-Trip Medication Worksheet (if using)

SECTION 2 — Questions to Ask Your GP

Medications & Supply

- ☐ **"Can I get a 3-month (or longer) supply of my regular medications before I leave?"**
→ PBS rules limit standard supply to 1–2 months for most medicines. Your GP may be able to authorise extended supply or provide additional repeats. Ask specifically.
- ☐ **"Do any of my medications need early dispensing approval?"**
→ If your next refill isn't due until after departure, ask your GP to contact Medicare or the pharmacy to approve early dispensing.
- ☐ **"Will any of my medications be affected by heat, UV exposure, or humidity?"**
→ Critical for caravan travel. Some medications (insulin, certain antibiotics, suppositories) degrade rapidly above 25–30°C. Ask for specific storage guidance.
- ☐ **"Are there any dosing adjustments I should know about in extreme heat or if I'm more physically active?"**
→ Relevant for blood pressure medications, diuretics, diabetes medication, and medications that affect sweating or temperature regulation.
- ☐ **"Can I get a written medication list on practice letterhead to carry with me?"**
→ Useful at any pharmacy, hospital, or emergency department en route — particularly in remote areas where your records won't be readily accessible.

Controlled & Schedule 8 Medications

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- ☐ **"I am travelling with [medication name] — do I need a permit to carry this across state borders?"**
→ S8 permit requirements differ by state. Your GP may need to apply on your behalf, or you may need to contact the relevant state health authority directly.
- ☐ **"Can you provide a signed letter on practice letterhead confirming I am prescribed this medication for travel?"**
→ Required by pharmacists, hospitals, and potentially border/customs officers. See the GP Letter Template for full content requirements.
- ☐ **"Are there any restrictions on the quantity I can legally carry?"**
→ Some S8 medications have state-specific possession limits. Your GP should advise and document the clinically appropriate quantity.

Fitness to Travel & Condition Management

- ☐ **"Am I fit to travel to remote areas, given my current health?"**
→ A direct question. For cardiac conditions, recent surgery, or unstable chronic illness, your GP may want to run tests or refer you before clearing you.
- ☐ **"What warning signs should prompt me to seek urgent medical help while I'm away?"**
→ Ask this for each major condition you manage. Get specific — e.g. "What symptoms should make me activate my PLB?"
- ☐ **"Can you provide a written action plan for [condition] for emergency use?"**
→ Particularly important for asthma, anaphylaxis, diabetes, epilepsy, or cardiac conditions. A laminated copy in your first aid kit could save your life.
- ☐ **"Are my vaccinations current for the regions I'm travelling through?"**
→ Ask specifically about tetanus, Q fever (if farming areas), hepatitis A/B, and any recent travel medicine recommendations for northern Australia.
- ☐ **"Should I carry any emergency medications I don't currently have? (e.g. adrenaline, antibiotics)"**
→ For remote travel, GPs can sometimes prescribe a standby course of antibiotics, or an EpiPen if there is any anaphylaxis risk. Ask explicitly.

Referrals & Specialist Care

- ☐ **"Do I need any blood tests, scans, or specialist reviews before I go?"**
→ If you have a chronic condition, your GP may want recent results before clearing you for extended remote travel.
- ☐ **"If I need to see a doctor en route, what information should I give them about my history?"**
→ Ask your GP to prepare a brief medical summary letter. This is especially valuable if you are managing something complex.

SECTION 3 — Requesting Early Dispensing & Extended Supply

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What is early dispensing?

Normally, PBS prescriptions cannot be filled until close to when your current supply runs out. "Early dispensing" is when your pharmacist fills a prescription before it is technically due. Your GP can note on the prescription that early supply is approved or contact Medicare directly.

How to Ask Your GP

1. Tell your GP your exact departure date and return date upfront.
2. Ask: "My prescription for [medication] is due to run out on [date], which is after I leave. Can you write a new prescription now or note early dispensing is approved?"
3. For PBS Authority prescriptions, your GP must call Medicare to obtain an authority number — this can take a day or two, so book your appointment early.
4. Ask your GP to provide enough repeats to cover your trip duration plus a 14-day buffer minimum.
5. Once you have the prescription, call your regular pharmacy to confirm stock levels — especially for less common medications.

SECTION 4 — Notes From Your Appointment

Medications — Changes or Notes

Conditions — Advice & Warning Signs

Documents to Collect Before Departure

- ☐ Medication list on letterhead
- ☐ GP letter for controlled substances (if applicable)
- ☐ Written action plan for _____
- ☐ Referral or specialist letter
- ☐ Other: _____

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Follow-Up Actions

- ☐ Book follow-up appointment for: _____
- ☐ Blood tests / scans ordered: _____
- ☐ Contact state health authority re S8 permit for: _____
- ☐ Call pharmacy to confirm stock of: _____

Key Phone Numbers

000	Emergency Services
112	Mobile — no signal
13 11 26	Poisons Info (24/7)
1300 669 569	RFDS Enquiries
1800 022 222	healthdirect (24/7)
1800 111 092	NT DACAS — S8

Documents Checklist — Carry at All Times

- ☐ Medicare card
- ☐ All original prescription labels on medications
- ☐ Medication list (printed copy)
- ☐ GP letter for controlled substances (if applicable)
- ☐ Written action plans (asthma, anaphylaxis, cardiac, etc.)
- ☐ Private health insurance card
- ☐ Emergency contact details (wallet AND phone)
- ☐ PLB registered — beacon ID n _____