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DU CANADA

Environmental Scan

ACCESS TO NALOXONE ACROSS CANADA

JULY 2017

DISCLAIMER:

The information presented in this environmental scan was derived from a number of sources. To the best of our knowledge, the information is accurate and reliable as of the date of publication.



Executive Summary

In light of the current opioid crisis in Canada, the Canadian Pharmacists Association (CPhA) has created the following scan of naloxone availability to better understand how naloxone is accessible to patients across the country. As with other health services, each province has unique regulations and frameworks in place to support patient access to naloxone. This scan serves as a tool to help identify gaps and barriers to naloxone supply and access, and provoke further discussion about pharmacy's role in the distribution of naloxone as well as the larger opioid crisis.

The findings of this scan demonstrate that improvements must be made in most Canadian jurisdictions to increase patient access to naloxone. Alberta, Ontario, Northwest Territories and Yukon are currently the only jurisdictions that offer free, unrestricted access to naloxone through first line responders, health centres, and pharmacies. However, different barriers exist even in these jurisdictions. For example, pre-assembled Take-Home Naloxone (THN) kits are not readily available for pharmacies to purchase and often must be assembled in pharmacies. In Ontario patients must present a valid health card at the pharmacy to receive a free THN kit, which may act as a barrier for the most vulnerable populations.

In most other jurisdictions, access to free naloxone is limited by eligibility restrictions and/or because it is only available through specific providers (e.g. first line responders). Where free naloxone is not available or where patients are not eligible for the program, news reports have indicated that the cost of obtaining a naloxone kit are prohibitive, especially with regards to the nasal spray format.

The Canadian Pharmacists Association strongly believes that naloxone should be readily available to all Canadians at no cost, regardless of where they live. We therefore recommend that all provinces implement publicly-funded Take-Home Naloxone programs to ensure that naloxone is available to all residents without restrictions on eligibility, supply or cost. Furthermore, naloxone should be available through a variety of providers, including community pharmacies, community health centres, and first responders (i.e. police and fire fighters). Although only one part of the solution, reducing harm from opioid overdose is an important tactic in the larger strategy to address the opioid crisis and advancements must be made to ensure equitable access to naloxone for all Canadians.



Summary chart of access to naloxone across Canada

	Free Take-Home Naloxone Kits				Emergency Naloxone available through first responders	Naloxone available for purchase at pharmacies
	Distributed through pharmacies		Distributed through other sites			
	Available for all	Restricted eligibility	Available for all	Restricted eligibility		
BC		✓		✓	✓	✓
AB	✓		✓		✓	
SK				✓ ¹	✓	✓
MB		✓ ¹		✓ ¹	✓	✓
ON	✓ ²			✓	✓	✓
QC		✓ ¹			✓	✓
NB					✓	✓
NS	✓ ³			✓ ¹	✓	✓
PEI					✓	✓
NL				✓	✓	✓
NWT	✓		✓		✓	✓
YT	✓		✓		✓	—*
NU	—*	—*	—*	—*	✓	—*

Blank = Not available in the province/territory.

—* = Insufficient information available.

1. Number of pharmacies/sites limited.
2. Patients must present a valid Ontario health card to receive free naloxone.
3. Program details and eligibility requirements pending.



Background

On March 22, 2016, Health Canada removed naloxone hydrochloride from the Prescription Drug List for emergency use outside hospital settings for opioid overdose. The National Association of Pharmacy Regulatory Authorities (NAPRA) then provided guidance to provincial and territorial pharmacy regulatory authorities on the placement of naloxone under Schedule II category (Appendix B).

At the provincial and territorial levels, provincial pharmacy associations and regulators worked with provincial governments to make amendments to the provincial drug schedules to reschedule naloxone as a Schedule II product. BC was the first province to make the amendment after the federal amendments became law and it was also the first jurisdiction in Canada to deregulate and unschedule naloxone to make it available outside pharmacies.

Naloxone schedules across Canada

	BC	AB	SK	MB	ON	QC	NB	NS	PEI	NL	NWT	YT	NU
Schedule II drug ¹			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Unscheduled	✓	✓											

Blank = Not available in the province/territory.

1. Please refer to Appendix B for a definition of a Schedule II drug.



Patient Access to Naloxone

While naloxone is available in each province and territory, patient access is uneven across the country.

Emergency naloxone availability across Canada

Emergency Naloxone		BC	AB	SK	MB	ON	QC	NB	NS	PEI	NL	NWT	YT	NU	
	Paramedics/ EMTs	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	—*
	Police officers	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓ ¹		✓	✓	✓	✓		—*	✓	✓
	Transit police	✓													
	Firefighters	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓ ¹		✓	—*	—*	—*	—*	—*	—*	—*
	Hospitals/ emergency rooms	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Blank = Not available in the province/territory.

—* = Insufficient information available.

1. Varies by jurisdiction



Availability of naloxone kits across Canada

		BC	AB	SK	MB	ON	QC	NB	NS	PEI	NL	NWT	YT	NU
Publicly-funded THN kits	Community pharmacies	✓ ^{1,2}	✓		✓ ^{1,2}	✓	✓ ^{1,2}		✓	✓	✓	✓ ³	✓	—*
	Correctional facilities	✓	✓			✓			✓	✓	✓	—*	—*	—*
	Shelters	✓		—*	✓ ²	✓				—*		—*	✓	—*
	Treatment centres/ Addiction services	✓	✓	✓	✓ ²	✓			✓ ²	—*	✓	—*	✓	—*
	Health care centres/ walk-in clinics	✓	✓	✓	✓ ²	✓			✓ ²	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Other community agencies	✓		—*		✓			✓ ²	—*	—*	—*	—*	—*
Naloxone for purchase	Community pharmacies	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	—*
	Other community organizations													

Blank = not available in the province/territory.

—* Insufficient information available.

1. Eligibility restrictions apply.
2. Number of pharmacies/sites limited.
3. Currently limited to intranasal naloxone as the territory transitions to Take-Home Injection Naloxone Kits.

In response to Canada's opioid crisis, provinces and territories have put in place a number of strategies to ensure naloxone is available to first responders, health care workers, high risk users and the public. Take-Home Naloxone (THN) programs are part of a strategy whereby pharmacies, clinics and other community organizations supply naloxone kits and education to high-risk individuals, support networks and (in some cases) members of the general public at no cost. Program format, eligibility criteria and the number of participating supply centres vary greatly between provinces who participate in publicly-funded THN programs. [Kits](#) usually consist of



2–3 ampoules of 1 mL naloxone 0.4 mg/mL, 2–3 syringes, 2–3 ampoule breakers, 1 pair of non-latex gloves, and 1 rescue breathing barrier.

Seven provinces and territories have included pharmacies as distributors of naloxone kits obtained through publicly-funded THN programs. The Northwest Territories and Yukon are the only jurisdictions where THN kits are reported to be available in every pharmacy. In the Northwest Territories, this is currently limited to intranasal naloxone (Narcan) as the territory works to prepare health care providers and pharmacists for a transition to an injectable THN program. [Three](#) pharmacies in BC, [four](#) in Quebec and two in Manitoba have been authorized to participate in their respective provincial THN programs.

In most provinces and territories, Schedule II naloxone is also available for purchase at pharmacies. Alberta is the only province that does not authorize pharmacists to prepare or sell kits to Albertans outside the THN program. While the Alberta THN program is only available to citizens who are at risk of opioid overdose or who may encounter others who have overdosed on opioids, the guidelines state that refusal to provide a THN kit would only be done under extraordinary circumstances.

Naloxone Nasal Spray

On June 6, 2016, as an extraordinary public health emergency measure in response to the current opioid crisis, the Minister of Health signed an [Interim Order](#) allowing the US Narcan® Nasal Spray to be imported and sold in Canada without a prescription for a temporary period of up to one year for use in the emergency treatment of known or suspected opioid overdoses.

On June 20, 2017, Health Canada announced that the Canadian authorized version of Narcan would transition onto the market by July 5, 2017. It does not require a prescription and is indicated for emergency to reverse known or suspected opioid overdose.

The supply of Narcan is currently only available through the manufacturer, ADAPT Pharma Canada, and is not being distributed through wholesalers. Narcan (naloxone HCl 4 mg/0.1 mL) nasal spray is sold as a single-dose sprayer in cartons containing two devices. It can be obtained by contacting ADAPT Pharma Canada (adaptcanada@customer-support.ca, 1-877-870-2726).

The [Northwest Territories](#) is currently the only jurisdiction that provides naloxone nasal spray through a publicly-funded Take-Home Naloxone program. The government has specified that this is an interim measure until they transition to a THN injection program.



News reports have indicated that RCMP, police officers and other first responders now carry naloxone nasal spray. The availability of naloxone nasal spray for purchase in pharmacies across Canada is not well documented; however news sources have reported that its [prohibitive cost](#) may be a [major barrier](#) to access.

Cost to Patients

Individuals who receive health coverage through First Nations Inuit Health under the [Non-Insured Health Benefits \(NIHB\) Program](#) are eligible to receive naloxone for free through a pharmacy or other providers across Canada. Where pharmacies are providing ancillary supplies to support safe naloxone administration and overdose management, providers can bill the cost of the naloxone and ancillary supplies as a naloxone kit.

Pharmacies that participate in THN programs must distribute naloxone kits free of charge to patients, however eligibility requirements apply to all THN programs. In Ontario, eligible patients must be current users of opioids, past users at risk of returning to opioid use, or family members, friends or others in a position to assist a person at risk of overdose from opioids. Beyond these requirements, a patient must present a health card to the pharmacy in order to be eligible to qualify for the publicly-funded program. The Alberta program includes a workaround for pharmacists to enable patients who do not have a valid personal health number to participate in the THN program. The pharmacist may enter a “pseudo-personal health number” which allows the claim to go through Alberta Health successfully.

Where there is no public funding for naloxone, the cost to patients – either for injectable or inhaled format – varies greatly between provinces and pharmacies. News sources have described the nasal spray as costing as much as [\\$125-\\$145](#) for two single-use doses. The injectable form is less expensive, with some sources reporting [\\$5-\\$20](#) per dose or ampule, or [\\$30-\\$70](#) for a complete naloxone kit.



Availability

A listing of locations that supply naloxone is not readily available across Canada, however the government of Canada’s Naloxone [webpage](#) provides links to lists supplied from each jurisdiction. A complete list of all locations carrying THN kits, including all pharmacies, is published only by Alberta Health Services and the government of Ontario. The following table shows where in the country information on access to naloxone is available through various platforms.

Availability of information on access to naloxone across Canada

	BC	AB	SK	MB	ON	QC	NB	NS	PEI	NL	NWT	YT	NU
Provincial government & partners	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓ ¹					✓ ²	✓	
College of Pharmacists				✓									
Media & other				✓								✓	✓ ³

Blank = not available in the province/territory.

1. Participating pharmacies listed on page 25.
2. No list, however naloxone should be available at every pharmacy.
3. Article reports only that health centres across Nunavut are stocked with naloxone.

The media has reported extensively on the severity of the opioid crisis in BC and Alberta, though there have been no reports of a naloxone scarcity in these provinces. There are over [400 distribution sites](#) across BC, including pharmacies. Every pharmacy in the Northwest Territories participates in the publicly-funded THN program.

Patient access to naloxone in the rest of the country, especially through pharmacies, is more limited. Only two [Manitoba](#) pharmacies have been authorized to participate in the THN program (60 pharmacies supply naloxone to the public). [Quebec](#)’s THN program includes only four pharmacies and it does not appear that pharmacies are selling many kits to patients outside the program. The [Nova Scotia](#) pilot THN program had fairly strict eligibility criteria; patients who did not qualify were required to purchase naloxone outside the program at high costs. More funding has been provided for THN programs in the province, which includes pharmacies, however details have not yet been made available regarding new patient eligibility requirements.



Supply

Alberta, the Northwest Territories and Yukon are the only jurisdictions where pharmacies can order pre-assembled THN kits at no charge. In other provinces, pharmacies supplying naloxone kits — either publicly-funded or not — must either pay upfront for pre-assembled kits supplied through wholesalers/distributors or order each component and assemble the kits themselves. To help pharmacists with this task, the Ontario Pharmacists Association has produced a [resource list](#) of naloxone kit components as well as suppliers for each item.

Naloxone supply to pharmacies across Canada

	BC	AB	SK	MB	ON	QC	NB	NS	PEI	NL	NWT	YT	NU
THN program in community pharmacies	✓ ^{1,2}	✓		✓✓ ^{1,2}	✓✓	✓ ^{1,2}					✓	✓	
Naloxone for purchase in community pharmacies	✓		✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	

- ✓ Pre-assembled kits
- ✓ Pharmacy-assembled kits

Blank = not available in the province/territory.
 -* Insufficient information available.

1. Available only to high-risk individuals.
2. Number of pharmacies/sites limited.



Patient Assessment

In provinces with publicly-funded THN programs, pharmacists are required to assess a patient's eligibility for the program prior to dispensing a free naloxone kit. Provincial regulations also require pharmacists to review a patient's history of opioid use, naloxone use and response, allergies and types of reactions and offer complete counselling every time a customer purchases naloxone. Pharmacists should be aware that they play an important role in mitigating Canada's opioid crisis; this should be carefully considered when dispensing naloxone, with every attempt made not to restrict access.

The Canadian Pharmacists Association (CPhA) provides complimentary, online naloxone training to pharmacists. These resources are available on an [Opioid Crisis](#) webpage and include educational and advocacy videos for pharmacists, an article providing information about incorporating naloxone into pharmacy practice, infographics, and a Naloxone for Opioid Overdose [webinar](#) (member-only access). CPhA is also developing a scan of all opioid education available to pharmacists in Canada, including naloxone training.

Patient Training on the Use of Naloxone

In all provinces, pharmacists are required to ensure that patients are properly trained on the use and administration of naloxone at the time of dispensing. In some provinces, such as Ontario, the College of Pharmacists lists a number of topics that pharmacists must review with patients. In others, as in Alberta, the regulations state that a pharmacist must enter into a dialogue and provide sufficient information to enable the patient to receive the intended benefit of the drug therapy. CPhA and provincial pharmacy associations (see Appendix A) have developed a number of tools to help educate patients on the proper administration of injectable naloxone.

Provinces with publicly-funded THN programs may have more extensive patient training requirements. For example, in order to receive a naloxone kit at no charge from an approved THN site in BC, a person must have completed the province's Take-Home Naloxone training. In Quebec, a patient must complete naloxone training and obtain a certificate of completion from an accredited training provider in order to receive naloxone under the THN program.



APPENDIX A: Naloxone Availability by Province

British Columbia

March 23, 2016: An amendment was made to the provincial Drug Schedules Regulation to move naloxone from Schedule I (prescription only), to Schedule II (behind the counter) outside of hospital settings.

September 21, 2016: The College of Pharmacists of BC changed the status of emergency-use naloxone (non-hospital use) from a Schedule II drug to [unscheduled](#). Naloxone for emergency use is now available anywhere and may be purchased by anyone.

Publicly-funded Take-Home Naloxone (THN) Program

A publicly-funded [THN program](#) provides kits free of charge to most marginalized populations who are at high risk of opioid overdose and cannot afford to purchase naloxone. The program does not supply kits to other populations at this time. [Only those](#) who are most likely to witness and respond to an overdose and have completed the [Take-Home Naloxone training](#) may obtain a publicly-funded THN naloxone kit.

According to the program [site locator](#), only three BC pharmacies participate in the THN program. Other sites that provide the THN kits include treatment centres, health units and centres, churches, clinics and other locations suitable for reaching people at high risk of or likely to witness overdoses. To qualify, sites must have an overseeing health care provider on-site. To order THN kits, participating sites must complete and send the THN Supply Requisition Form, and supplies will be packaged and shipped from the BC Centre for Disease Control during the week following the placement of the order. Delivery time is expected to be at least two weeks.

Purchasing Naloxone in Pharmacy

For those who do not qualify to receive a free THN kit, naloxone is available for purchase at community pharmacies without a prescription. Naloxone can be purchased by anyone, including organizations. Training is provided at the time of purchase.

Cost to Patients

The price of naloxone through BC pharmacies varies. One media [source](#) has indicated that the injectable form may cost between \$5-\$20 per dose while the nasal



spray may cost \$125 for two doses. Costs also vary between the individual naloxone drug versus the kit, which may contain 2-3 doses.

Patient Assessment and Education

The [College of Pharmacists of BC](#) emphasizes the importance of patient training on the use of naloxone at the time of purchase. To receive a naloxone kit at no charge from a BCCDC-approved THN site, a person must have completed the provincial Take-Home Naloxone training and be “most likely to witness and respond to an opioid overdose.”

Pharmacist Training and Resources

The British Columbia Pharmacy Association offers its members naloxone practice tools, a recording of an education session “Schedule II Naloxone for Opioid Overdose: What Pharmacists Need to Know” and a webinar of the Q&A follow up session. These are available through a member-only [eTraining page](#).

The College of Pharmacists of BC worked with the Ministry of Health, BC Centre for Disease Control and patient advocacy groups to provide [naloxone educational sessions](#) to pharmacy professionals in the spring of 2016. Other [educational resources](#) have been made available on the College of Pharmacists of BC website to guide pharmacy professionals in providing training to patients seeking naloxone. A [Decision Support Tool for Naloxone Administration](#) is also available through the BC Centre for Disease Control.

Documentation

As an unscheduled drug product in BC, there are no specific record-keeping requirements for pharmacists to follow when dispensing naloxone.

Additional Information

[BC Response to the Opioid Overdose Crisis](#)

[Life-saving naloxone now available without a prescription](#)

[The College of Pharmacists of BC: Naloxone Resources](#)



Alberta

May 13, 2016: Naloxone is made available in community pharmacies without prescription as a Schedule II drug for use in emergency treatment of opioid overdose outside of a hospital setting.

February 6, 2017: Regulations are amended to make emergency-use naloxone for opioid overdose outside hospital settings [unscheduled](#) in order to facilitate broader access to THN kits.

Publicly-funded Take-Home Naloxone (THN) Program

THN kits are available at many [pharmacies and walk-in clinics](#) (interactive map). A list of [pharmacies carrying THN kits](#) is updated weekly through Alberta Health Services.

The THN program provides kits free of charge to pharmacies for provision of individual kits to Albertans who are at risk or may encounter others who are at risk of opioid overdose. Pharmacists are not authorized to prepare and/or sell kits outside of this program.

THN kits can be obtained at no charge through McKesson once the pharmacy is registered for the THN program. Pharmacies may order two THN kits per order, and may re-order as often as required. One kit may be dispensed at a time per client.

Purchasing Naloxone in Pharmacy

The publicly-funded THN program is available to all Albertans who are at risk of opioid overdose or who may encounter others who have overdosed on opioids. The [guidelines](#) published by the Alberta College of Pharmacists state that it would be unlikely that it would not be appropriate to provide a THN kit to someone who requests it.

Cost to Patients

Not applicable. All Albertans should have access to the THN program. Refusal to provide a THN kit would only be done under extraordinary circumstances

Patient Assessment and Education

According to the [guidelines](#), a pharmacist must consider appropriate patient information, such as hypersensitivity reactions, cardiac disease, pregnancy, etc., when assessing whether it is appropriate to dispense naloxone. Although naloxone is not contraindicated in these situations, caution should be exercised and pharmacists should consider any other patient specific information that may affect the decision to provide naloxone.

A pharmacist must provide sufficient information to enable the patient to receive the intended benefit of the drug therapy. When naloxone is provided to a person for the



first time, a pharmacist must enter into a dialogue with that person and provide information as outlined in the training for participation in the THN program.

Pharmacist Training and Resources

To participate in the publicly-funded THN program, pharmacists must complete the Online Education Program [Take-Home Naloxone - Information for the Pharmacist](#). The Alberta College of Pharmacists has also published [Guidance for Pharmacists and Pharmacy Technicians Dispensing Naloxone as a Schedule II Drug](#). Other training includes the following:

- [ODT Guidelines: Medication-Assisted Treatment for Opioid Dependence: Guidelines for Pharmacists and Pharmacy Technicians](#) (Alberta College of Pharmacists)
- [Beyond Naloxone: What Role will Pharmacists Play in Alberta's Opioid Crisis](#) (Alberta Pharmacists' Association). This free course is restricted to RxA members and is funded through a grant from the Change Foundation.
- [Opioid Dependence Treatment Core Course – Alberta Version Blended Component](#) (Centre for Addiction and Mental Health and the University of Calgary)

Documentation

A pharmacist or pharmacy technician must ensure an appropriate entry is made in the patient's record indicating that naloxone was provided, the date, and the identification of the pharmacist who provided it. If the requestor is not willing to identify the patient for whom they are requesting the kit, a pharmacist or pharmacy technician must create a record indicating that a THN kit was provided to an unknown patient, the date, and the identification of the pharmacist who provided the kit.

Additional Information

[Alberta Health Services THN Program](#)

[Guidance for Pharmacists and Pharmacy Technicians Dispensing or Selling Naloxone as a Schedule 2 Drug](#)

[Naloxone moves to unscheduled drug](#)



Saskatchewan

In November 2016, the Saskatchewan College of Pharmacy Professionals announced that pharmacists may provide a Naloxone hydrochloride injection when indicated for emergency use for opioid overdose outside hospital settings as a Schedule II drug in community pharmacies without prescription after considering appropriateness and ensuring that users are trained and educated on its proper administration.

Publicly-funded Take-Home Naloxone (THN) Program

Publicly-funded THN kits are available at one site in each of [six](#) Saskatchewan cities: Saskatoon, Regina, North Battleford, Kamsack, Yorkton, and Prince Albert.

Purchasing Naloxone in Pharmacy

Pharmacies are able to sell naloxone kits to interested individuals. Pharmacies may order pre-assembled standardized naloxone kits directly through The Control Group or McKesson Canada.

Cost to Patients

The price of naloxone varies by pharmacy. One media [source](#) has indicated that the injectable form may cost patients \$50–\$70 for a two-dose kit.

Patient Assessment and Education

Pharmacists may provide a Schedule II drug after consultation with the patient as per the NAPRA Standards of Practice for Non-Prescription Drugs. Pharmacists must ensure that naloxone users are trained and educated on its proper administration, including proper technique, appropriate dose, use of appropriate supplies and how to avoid and manage needle-stick injury, which are not well covered in the labelling.

Pharmacist Training and Resources

The Pharmacy Association of Saskatchewan provided its members with access to a CPhA webinar and has a comprehensive list of related naloxone resources available on its website. Additional training through the Continuing Professional Development for Pharmacy Professionals, University of Saskatchewan, was announced recently.

Documentation

Insufficient information available.

Additional Information

[Opioid Agonist Therapy Conference, Saskatoon, SK, April, 2016](#)

[Saskatchewan College of Pharmacy Professionals SCOPE Newsletter November 2016](#)

[Take-Home Naloxone: Overdose Prevention Training and Kits](#)



Manitoba

June 24, 2016: Naloxone is made available without a prescription as a Schedule II drug and may be distributed by community pharmacists as a kit with education and training provided to clients on its use in an emergency.

December 22, 2016: Naloxone hydrochloride nasal spray, when indicated for emergency use for opioid overdose outside hospital settings, is granted Schedule II status in [Manitoba](#).

Publicly-funded Take-Home Naloxone (THN) Program

The publicly-funded THN program in Manitoba is managed by [Street Connections](#) and includes one pharmacy. Free naloxone kits through the program are only available to those who have injected an opioid drug in the last 6 months. The Street Connections website [interactive map](#) shows places where THN kits are available.

Purchasing Naloxone in Pharmacy

For those who are not eligible for the THN program, the College of Pharmacists of Manitoba has posted a [list](#) of pharmacies that have naloxone kits available for purchase.

Cost to Patients

Insufficient information available.

Patient Assessment and Education

When dispensing naloxone, pharmacists must review a patient's history of opioid use, naloxone use and response, allergies and types of reactions and offer complete counselling every time a customer purchases naloxone.

Pharmacists are expected to provide counselling prior to each sale of a naloxone. Important education and training points include, but are not limited to:

- How to identify an opioid overdose
- The contents of each THN kit
- The importance of rescue breathing
- When to administer naloxone
- How to prepare the dose for administration by withdrawing the dose of naloxone from the ampoule/vial into the syringe
- How to landmark on the thigh and administer an intramuscular injection
- How to avoid and manage needle-stick injuries
- When to use the second dose of naloxone
- The importance of calling 911 immediately for medical assistance due to the short half-life of the drug
- After care and the importance of staying with the person until emergency first responders arrive



Pharmacists are reminded to emphasize the importance of contacting emergency services (911) in the event of an opioid overdose. Pharmacists should counsel their patients on the risk of rebound toxicity following administration of naloxone and the importance of follow-up monitoring after an overdose. The current labels for naloxone do not adequately cover this information, thus reinforcing the importance of the pharmacist's role in dispensing naloxone.

Pharmacist Training and Resources

All pharmacists must complete the following education before dispensing naloxone:

- i. Review the [Overdose Prevention and Response Training Manual](#) updated by College of Pharmacists of Manitoba in September 2016
- ii. Watch the educational video; [Naloxone Saves Lives, Hello Cool World](#)
- iii. Read the [Practice Direction Sale of NAPRA Schedule II Drugs](#) (non-prescription, pharmacy only sale)
- iv. Thoroughly review the [Guidelines for Pharmacists Selling Naloxone as a Schedule II Drug](#) published by the College of Pharmacists of Manitoba
- v. Engage in additional ongoing professional development as deemed necessary

More resources are available through the [College of Pharmacists of Manitoba](#).

Documentation

The record keeping requirements for naloxone are the same as any other Schedule II product.

Additional Information

[SUBOXONE® \(BUPRENORPHINE/NALOXONE\) Reference Sheet](#)

[Guidelines for Pharmacists Selling Naloxone as a Schedule II Drug](#)



Ontario

June 24, 2016: When indicated for emergency use for opioid overdose outside hospital settings, Naloxone is available in Ontario as a Schedule II drug.

December 22, 2016: Pharmacists in Ontario are authorised to dispense any formulation of naloxone (including a nasal spray) available for sale and distribution in Canada without prescription.

Publicly-funded Take-Home Naloxone (THN) Program

Pharmacists are authorized to dispense free THN kits obtained through the Ministry of Health [Naloxone Program for Pharmacies](#) or through privately procured supplies to eligible patients. Eligibility includes 1) patients who are either currently using opioids, 2) who are past users at risk of retuning to opioid use, or 3) family members, friends or others in a position to assist a person at risk of overdose from opioids. Patients must also present a valid Ontario health card in order to receive a free kit. A maximum of one naloxone kit may be provided to an eligible person at one time.

The Ontario ministry of health arranged for a small, one-time only auto-shipment of pre-assembled naloxone kits to be made to select methadone and/or Suboxone-dispensing pharmacies across the province. Pharmacist access to pre-assembled kits and/or some individual components is difficult at this time as they are not yet available to all pharmaceutical distributors.

Pharmacies who do not receive take-home naloxone kits through the THN program can order pre-assembled kits through wholesalers or The Control Group or assemble kits themselves for distribution to eligible patients. The Ontario Pharmacists Association has assembled a [list of the required kit components as well as some suppliers](#) for these items.

Purchasing Naloxone in Pharmacy

Naloxone is available for purchase in pharmacies for patients who do not meet the eligibility criteria for the publicly-funded THN program.

Cost to Patients

Insufficient information available.

Patient Assessment and Education

The Ontario College of Pharmacists guidance states that those seeking to obtain naloxone require training from a pharmacist on how to properly inject the drug and ensure appropriate medical attention is given in follow-up. Patients and/or agents must be educated on more than just naloxone therapy and how to administer it. Pharmacists should ensure patients and/or agents purchasing naloxone are also educated on such topics as:



- Harm reduction strategies when using opioids;
- How to identify an opioid overdose;
- Importance of immediately calling 9-1-1;
- Importance of cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and how and when to give breaths;
- When and how to administer naloxone;
- Aftercare and the importance of staying with the person until emergency first responders arrive;
- Withdrawal symptoms occur following naloxone administration and reversal of the effects of the opioid overdose. Doses of naloxone administered via one or two vials or ampoules will, in most cases, only produce mild withdrawal symptoms and the benefits outweigh the risks associated with withdrawal;
- Naloxone may have variable efficacy in reversing the clinical effects of an overdose due to preparations containing buprenorphine;
- Naloxone is not effective against respiratory depression due to non-opioid drugs;
- Risk of secondary overdose if opioids used when patient regains consciousness; and
- Any other information the pharmacist deems relevant.

Pharmacist Training and Resources

It is the [professional responsibility](#) of a pharmacist to ensure that he or she has sufficient knowledge, skills and abilities to competently dispense naloxone to patients. Pharmacists who have met the appropriate training requirements are authorized to provide naloxone without a prescription and at no cost to eligible Ontarians.

The Ontario Pharmacists Association (OPA) has developed [practice resources](#), downloadable posters for public awareness and an [online module](#) with education for pharmacists on naloxone in the treatment of opioid overdose and other tools to assist pharmacists with educating patients and/or patient representatives. OPA has also created a supplementary program titled Naloxone in Pharmacies – Obligation, Opportunity, and Optics, which provides an overview of naloxone’s pharmacology, the societal context behind naloxone programs, pharmacy’s role in naloxone programs, the importance and impact of naloxone to the business of pharmacy and to the profession as a whole. A number of other external training resources are recommended to pharmacists on [Ontario College of Pharmacists](#) website.

Documentation

Documentation requirements for naloxone are the same as for any other Schedule II product. Pharmacists may be required to report additional information in accordance with requirements set out by the Ontario Naloxone Program for Pharmacies.

Additional Information

[Ontario College of Pharmacists guidance for pharmacy professionals when dispensing or selling naloxone as a Schedule II drug](#)



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[Ontario Naloxone Program for Pharmacies \(ONPP\)](#)

[Ontario Naloxone Program for Pharmacies on Procurement of Naloxone kits](#)

[OPA 2017 Professional Development Programs Line-up](#)



Quebec

In Quebec, naloxone is a Schedule II drug. [Medical directives](#) signed by the regional public health authorities allow certain eligible pharmacies to dispense THN kits to individuals who have been trained and certified through community intervention centres on the use of injectable naloxone. There is insufficient information about the availability of naloxone for purchase in pharmacies across Quebec.

Publicly-funded Take-Home Naloxone (THN) Program

Since January 2015, free access to emergency naloxone kits has been provided to all eligible participants through [PROFAN](#), a local Montreal THN program. Eligibility includes those who are at risk of opioid overdose or those who may encounter others at risk of opioid overdose. The program description, eligibility, registration, administration and training requirements are available through the local health authorities [webpage](#) dedicated to naloxone distribution.

The Quebec Ministry of Health is currently evaluating whether it will expand access to naloxone in the province.

Purchasing Naloxone in Pharmacy

Insufficient information available.

Cost to Patients

Insufficient information available.

Patient Assessment and Education

The Quebec-based THN program selects and trains community workers and nurses who can act as trainers to service users on the administration of naloxone. Consumers, relatives or caregivers of at-risk opioid users can obtain naloxone from one of four participating pharmacies if they have a certificate of completed training from an accredited training provider. Training is free and available only in Montreal. The THN program in Quebec is called [PROFAN](#) (Prévenir et réduire les overdoses – Former et administrer la naloxone) and was developed in collaboration between the local health authorities, the College of Physicians, the College of Pharmacists and the College of Nurses and Health Emergency Professionals.

Access to publicly-funded naloxone was made available by drafting a collective prescription for pharmacists (three pharmacists were nominated under PROFAN), and it is valid for all eligible participants in the PROFAN program. The list of organizations that provide [training](#) is available on the local health authority website. Program participants must provide the pharmacy with a completed [tracking form](#) that should be faxed by the pharmacist to the public health authorities to monitor the program.



Pharmacist Training and Resources

Naloxone training is provided to participating health care workers through the PROFAN program. There is currently no pharmacy-specific naloxone training available in Quebec.

Documentation

Insufficient information available.

Additional Information

[Guide à l'intention des intervenants communautaires visant l'offre d'une intervention brève aux personnes utilisatrices d'opioïdes](#)

[Lignes directrices sur l'utilisation de la buprénorphine dans le traitement de la dépendance aux opioïdes](#)

[Prévenir et Réduire les Overdoses - Former et Accéder à la Naloxone \(PROFAN\)](#)



New Brunswick

Naloxone is now available as a Schedule II drug in New Brunswick.

Publicly-funded Take-Home Naloxone (THN) Program

Pharmacists and community groups in New Brunswick are calling on the provincial government to cover the cost of naloxone. The Department of Health is currently consulting with other jurisdictions with regards to their experiences and whether they have made naloxone available to the public. Without funding from the province, community groups are relying on donations to buy naloxone kits.

Purchasing Naloxone in Pharmacy

Currently, patients in New Brunswick must purchase naloxone at community pharmacies that choose to supply the Schedule II drug.

Cost to Patients

The cost of naloxone and Narcan nasal spray has been reported at \$40 for each kit.

<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/new-brunswick/naloxone-medical-students-new-brunswick-overdose-1.4106495>

Patient Assessment and Education

Insufficient information available.

Pharmacist Training and Resources

Insufficient information available.

Documentation

Insufficient information available.

Additional Information

[New Brunswick Pharmacists' Association appeal for improving access to naloxone](#)



Nova Scotia

June 24, 2016: Naloxone is made available in community pharmacies without a prescription. Naloxone is provided as a (1) kit obtained through the provincial Take-Home naloxone program; (2) kit approved for sale by Health Canada; or (3) kit assembled by the pharmacy.

Publicly-funded Take-Home Naloxone (THN) Program

In February 2016, the Nova Scotia Department of Health and Wellness provided funding for a one-year demonstration [THN program](#) in three communities with the highest incidence of overdoses per capita in the province. Frontline staff and opioid users had been trained and a total of 600 naloxone kits were distributed in the Halifax area and in Cape Breton.

In March 2017, the Nova Scotia government [announced](#) further investments in this area, with 5,000 more naloxone kits to be made available to pharmacies and other community and health care organizations. Program details and specifics regarding participation of pharmacies in the program are unknown. This scan will be updated as details become available.

Purchasing Naloxone in Pharmacy

Outside the pilot THN program, patients may purchase naloxone at community pharmacies. [Media sources](#) have listed some pharmacies that stock naloxone, however a comprehensive list is not available.

Nova Scotia pharmacists are not authorized to sell the lower cost (\$7-\$10) Schedule I prescription version of naloxone available through the provincial THN program. Instead, pharmacist must sell the more expensive Schedule II drug.

Cost to Patients

Pharmacy [naloxone kits](#) are sold for about \$70 initially, with refills costing \$40. This cost includes a [\\$40-\\$50 fee](#) that pharmacists charge for delivering education to patients and caregivers on the use of the naloxone, which can take up to an hour.

Patient Assessment and Education

Pharmacists must assess the client's understanding of the essential information required for safe administration of naloxone for emergency opiate overdose reversal. Pharmacists providing naloxone must be satisfied that the client has an appropriate understanding of the following:

- how to identify an opioid overdose;
- the importance of calling 911 immediately for medical assistance due to the short half-life of the naloxone;
- the importance of rescue breathing; when to administer naloxone;



- how to prepare the dose for administration by withdrawing the dose from the vial or ampoule;
- how to landmark the thigh and administer an intra-muscular injection;
- when to use the second vial or ampoule of naloxone;
- the need to remain with the victim to provide supportive measures and assess the need for subsequent doses while waiting for emergency first responders to arrive; and
- how to manage and avoid needle stick injury.

When providing subsequent supplies of naloxone, a pharmacist must determine the client's ongoing understanding of the proper administration of naloxone and review as appropriate.

Pharmacist Training and Resources

According to the [Nova Scotia College of Pharmacists](#), pharmacists providing naloxone must take reasonable steps to ensure they are competent to do so using available online educational resources through the College of Pharmacists of British Columbia and the Alberta Pharmacists' Association. Other naloxone resources for pharmacists are available through the Pharmacy Association of Nova Scotia website.

Documentation

Pharmacists are expected to meet the documentation requirements as set out in the [NAPRA Supplemental Standards of Practice for Schedule II and III Drugs](#).

Additional Information

[Nova Scotia College of Pharmacists Position Statement: Naloxone for Opioid Overdose Reversal](#)



Prince Edward Island

June 24, 2016: naloxone injection is moved from a Schedule I to a Schedule II drug when indicated for emergency use for opioid overdose outside hospital settings.

Publicly-funded Take-Home Naloxone (THN) Program

At this time, PEI does not have a publicly-funded THN program.

Purchasing Naloxone in Pharmacy

Patients may access naloxone through retail pharmacies.

Cost to Patients

Insufficient information available.

Patient Assessment and Education

Pharmacists must educate patients and/or agents on naloxone therapy and how to administer it. Pharmacists must ensure that they have provided the patient with the following information when they dispense naloxone, but is not limited to:

- How to identify an overdose
- Importance of calling 911 for medical assistance
- Importance of rescue breathing
- When to administer naloxone
- How to prepare the dose for administration
- How to landmark sites of administration
- When to administer additional naloxone doses including subsequent doses
- Importance of aftercare
- Withdrawal symptoms occur following naloxone administration and reversal of the effects of the opioid overdose.
- Naloxone may have variable efficacy in reversing the clinical effects of an overdose due to preparations containing buprenorphine.
- Naloxone is not effective for overdose due to non-opioid drugs such as benzodiazepines, and methamphetamines.
- How to manage a needle stick injury

Pharmacists must provide verbal advice in addition to written materials when dispensing naloxone, as written materials alone are not an adequate substitute for a dialogue with patients or their agents.

Pharmacist Training and Resources

According to the PEI College of Pharmacists [Policy for Pharmacy Professionals Dispensing or Selling Naloxone](#), it is the professional responsibility of a pharmacist to ensure they sufficient knowledge, skills and abilities to competently deliver any



pharmacy service. PEI pharmacists are encouraged to undergo training provided by the Ontario and Alberta pharmacists associations and the College of Pharmacists of British Columbia to ensure they are competent to provide naloxone.

Documentation

The record keeping requirements are the same for naloxone as any other Schedule II product, as described in the [Supplemental Standards of Practice for Schedule II and III drugs](#).

Additional Information

Insufficient information.



Newfoundland and Labrador

August 22, 2016: Naloxone is made available in community pharmacies without prescription. The Newfoundland and Labrador Pharmacy Board added naloxone to Schedule II as: “Naloxone hydrochloride injection, when indicated for emergency use for opioid overdose outside hospital settings”.

Publicly-funded Take-Home Naloxone (THN) Program

According to the [Health Canada Joint Statement on Action to Address Opioid Crisis](#), the Newfoundland and Labrador health authorities have committed to implementing a provincial THN kit program to increase capacity for opioid overdose response. As of January 2017, free naloxone kits are being distributed to target populations by the regional health authorities and the Safe Works Access Program (SWAP). A list of [Naloxone distribution sites](#) is published through the local health authorities website.

Purchasing Naloxone in Pharmacy

Patients may access naloxone through retail pharmacies.

Cost to Patients

Insufficient information available.

Patient Assessment and Education

Pharmacists should consider whether or not the sale of naloxone injection is appropriate based on a patient’s history of opioid use, past naloxone use, allergies and/or sensitivities, and pregnancy and lactation status.

Pharmacists are expected to provide counselling prior to each and every sale of a naloxone kit. This interaction will allow the pharmacist to review important education and training points and allow the purchaser the opportunity to ask questions and discuss concerns. In the case of the naloxone injection, counselling should include the following:

- a review of the contents of the naloxone injection kit;
- how to identify an opioid overdose;
- the importance of rescue breathing;
- when to administer naloxone;
- how to prepare the dose for administration by withdrawing the dose of naloxone from the ampoule/vial into the syringe;
- how to landmark the thigh and administer an intra-muscular injection;
- how to avoid and manage needle stick injuries;
- when to use the second vial or ampoule of naloxone;
- the importance of calling 911 immediately for medical assistance due to the short half-life of the drug;



- the need to remain with the victim to provide supportive measures and assess the need for subsequent doses while waiting for emergency first responders to arrive: and
- any other information the pharmacist deems relevant to the circumstances.

Pharmacist Training and Resources

According to the [guidelines](#) published by the Newfoundland and Labrador Pharmacy Board, pharmacists should complete training provided by the Alberta Pharmacists' Association and the College of Pharmacists of British Columbia to ensure they are competent to provide naloxone.

Documentation

A pharmacist who dispenses naloxone must record the sale or dispensing event in the patient's record, indicating that naloxone was provided, the date, and the identification of the pharmacist who provided it. If the requestor is not willing to identify the patient for whom they are requesting the kit, a record must indicate an unknown patient.

Additional Information

[Newfoundland and Labrador Pharmacy Board Guidelines for Pharmacy Practice: The Sale of Naloxone Injection in Community Pharmacies](#)



Northwest Territories

In the Northwest Territories, naloxone is a Schedule II drug, available without a prescription and distributed by pharmacists.

Publicly-funded Take-Home Naloxone (THN) Program

Currently, only intranasal naloxone is available through the publicly-funded [THN program](#) in the Northwest Territories. It has been supplied to every pharmacy in the province, albeit in limited quantities. The Department of Health and Social Services is planning to make Take-Home Injection Naloxone Kits available for distribution through all NWT retail pharmacies, health centres, clinics, hospitals and health cabins

Purchasing Naloxone in Pharmacy

The publicly-funded intranasal THN program is available to all residents of the Northwest Territories. Injectable naloxone may also be available for purchase at pharmacies; however it is not known how many pharmacies stock it.

Cost to Patients

Insufficient information available.

Patient Assessment and Education

Health care providers and pharmacists are required to educate the public about naloxone through the THN program.

Pharmacist Training and Resources

Plans are currently underway to ensure health care providers and pharmacists are properly prepared to provide the THN injection kits. Distribution of the THN injection kits and training of health care providers and pharmacists will occur in a phased approach with further information on this topic to follow in 2017.

Documentation

Insufficient information available.

Additional Information

[Backgrounder: Opioid Abuse and Naloxone Availability in the Northwest Territories](#)



Yukon

August 2016: Naloxone is given Schedule II status in Yukon. [Yukon drug schedules](#) are aligned with and change according to the national drug scheduling model developed by NAPRA.

Publicly-funded Take-Home Naloxone (THN) Program

The Yukon government recently implemented a THN program. As of January 31, 2017, THN kits are available in [all Yukon pharmacies](#). The THN program is publicly funded and the THN kits are available free of charge for pharmacies and clients, with no restriction. This includes clients at risk of opioid overdose or their family/friends/relatives. All pharmacists have been trained to counsel clients and are reimbursed for their professional services when doing so.

Purchasing Naloxone in Pharmacy

Injectable or intranasal naloxone may be purchased in pharmacies across Yukon.

Cost to Patients

Insufficient information available.

Patient Assessment and Education

To adhere to the harm reduction approach of the THN program, pharmacists are expected to provide counselling when dispensing naloxone kits to patients. The pharmacist must engage in conversation with the patient about safe drug use, available resources in the community, how to recognize signs of overdose, what to do in an overdose situation and must instruct client on how to draw and inject naloxone.

Pharmacist Training and Resources

Yukon has adopted “[know your source](#)” campaign materials as resources for pharmacist in naloxone training. Pharmacists were also offered a 1-hour training session on the THN Program through the Blood Ties Four Directions Centre. Further training resources for professionals are provided by the Yukon Health and Social Services Addiction [Resource Centre for Professionals](#).

Documentation

All THN kits distributed and dispensed in Yukon are logged into an online database. Pharmacists must input patient information into the database, however patients do not have to provide their name. Those who have obtained a THN kit are also instructed to return the used kits at which time the pharmacist completes a questionnaire with the patient—if they are willing to do so—to obtain information about how the kit was used, what were the outcomes, etc.



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Additional Information

[Supplemental Standards of Practice for Schedule II and III Drugs](#)



Nunavut

Naloxone is available as a Schedule II drug in Nunavut.

Publicly-funded Take-Home Naloxone (THN) Program

The government of Nunavut has announced that 100 naloxone kits will be delivered to all the health centres in Nunavut by the middle of February 2017. The kits can be accessed without a prescription by anyone who is concerned about an overdose.

Purchasing Naloxone in Pharmacy

Insufficient information available.

Cost to Patients

Insufficient information available.

Patient Assessment and Education

The provincially-funded THN kits will be supplied with a brief training session on how to draw up and inject the medication.

Pharmacist Training and Resources

Training resources for professionals are provided at the Yukon Health and Social Services Addiction [Resource Centre for Professionals](#), however there is insufficient information available as to whether specific resources are available for naloxone.

Documentation

Insufficient information available.

Additional Information

[Nunavut prepares to hand out naloxone kits to combat fentanyl overdoses](#)

[Supplemental Standards of Practice for Schedule II and III Drugs](#)



APPENDIX B: Schedule II Drug

Schedule II drugs do not require a prescription to be dispensed; however, when dispensed or sold in a pharmacy they must be stored and provided from the dispensary under the supervision of a pharmacist. When naloxone is provided to a person for the first time, a pharmacist must enter into a dialogue with that person. Before the sale of a Schedule II drug, the pharmacist must 1) consider appropriate information to assess whether it is appropriate to dispense or sell naloxone, 2) provide sufficient information to enable the patient to receive the intended benefit of the drug therapy, 3) record the sale or dispensing event.

[NAPRA Supplemental Standards of Practice for Schedule II set out the minimum acceptable standards of practice](#)