



## ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

# Access to naloxone across Canada



CANADIAN  
PHARMACISTS  
ASSOCIATION

ASSOCIATION DES  
PHARMACIENS  
DU CANADA

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**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, Quebec, Nova Scotia, 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, 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.

## 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		
British Columbia	P <sup>3</sup>	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓
Alberta	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗
Saskatchewan	✗	✗	✗	✓ <sup>1</sup>	✓	✓
Manitoba	✗	✓ <sup>1</sup>	✗	✓ <sup>1</sup>	✓	✓
Ontario	✓ <sup>2</sup>	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓
Quebec	✓ <sup>3</sup>	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓
New Brunswick	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓
Nova Scotia	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓
Prince Edward Island	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓
Newfoundland and Labrador	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓
Northwest Territories	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓
Yukon	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	i
Nunavut	i	i	i	i	✓	i

✓ Available    
 P Pending    
 i Insufficient information available    
 ✗ Not available in the province of territory

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 un-schedule 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 <sup>1</sup>	X	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Unscheduled	✓	✓	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

✓ Available X Not available in the province of 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

	BC	AB	SK	MB	ON	QC	NB	NS	PEI	NL	NWT	YT	NU
Paramedics/EMTs	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	i
Police officers	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓ <sup>1</sup>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	i	✓	✓
Transit police	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Firefighters	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓ <sup>1</sup>	✓	✓	i	i	i	i	i	i
Hospitals/ emergency rooms	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

✓ Available    i Insufficient information available    ✗ Not available in the province of territory

1. Varies by jurisdiction within the province.

## 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	✓ <sup>1</sup>	✓	✗	✓ <sup>1</sup>	✓	✓ <sup>1</sup>	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓ <sup>3</sup>	✓	i
	Correctional facilities	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	i	i	i
	Shelters	✓	✗	i	✓ <sup>2</sup>	✓	✗	✗	✗	i	✗	i	✓	i
	Treatment centres/ Addiction services	✓	✓	✓	✓ <sup>2</sup>	✓	✗	✗	✓ <sup>2</sup>	i	✓	i	✓	i
	Health care centres/ walk-in clinics	✓	✓	✓	✓ <sup>2</sup>	✓	✗	✗	✓ <sup>2</sup>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Other community agencies	✓	✗	i	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓ <sup>2</sup>	i	i	i	i	i
Naloxone for purchase	Community pharmacies	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	i
	Other community organizations	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗

✓ Available     
 i Insufficient information available     
 ✗ Not available in the province of territory

1. Current program contains eligibility restrictions and limited number of sites.
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.

Nine 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 and two in Manitoba have been authorized to participate in their respective provincial THN programs, however BC is moving toward having pharmacies participate more fully in the program.

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 20, 2017, Health Canada announced that the Canadian authorized version of Narcan would transition onto the market by July 5, 2017. Narcan 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](mailto:adaptcanada@customer-support.ca), 1-877-870-2726).

The [Northwest Territories](#) is the only jurisdiction that provides naloxone nasal spray through a publicly-funded THN 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 pharmacies or other providers across Canada. Where pharmacies provide ancillary supplies to support safe naloxone administration and overdose management, providers can claim 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 qualify for the publicly-funded program. The Alberta and Quebec programs include a workaround for pharmacists to enable patients who do not have a valid personal health number to participate in the THN program. In Alberta, for example, 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 by 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	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓ <sup>1</sup>	✓	✗
College of Pharmacists	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Media & other	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓ <sup>2</sup>

✓ Available ✗ Not available in the province of territory

1. No list, however naloxone should be available at every pharmacy.
2. Article reports only that health centres across Nunavut are stocked with naloxone.

# 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, such as McKesson Canada or The Control Group, 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.

# 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 the [Opioid Crisis](#) webpage and include educational and advocacy videos, information about incorporating naloxone into pharmacy practice, infographics, and a Naloxone for Opioid Overdose [webinar](#) (member-only). Provincial pharmacy associations also provide naloxone education to pharmacists, and in certain provinces, such as Alberta, these programs are mandatory for participation in THN programs (see Appendix A).

# 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, under the current program, a person must have completed the province's Take-Home Naloxone training. This training requirement may be eased as BC moves toward a more comprehensive THN program through community pharmacies.

# 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](#)

# 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 has completed the mandatory [education program](#) developed by the Alberta Pharmacists' Association in collaboration with Alberta Health and Alberta Health Services and registered to participate in 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 [Take-Home Naloxone - Information for the Pharmacist](#) education program developed by the Alberta Pharmacists' Association in collaboration with Alberta Health and Albert Health Services. This was the first naloxone training program developed for community pharmacists in Canada. It is hosted on the Alberta Pharmacists' Association website and open to all pharmacists in Alberta.

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 by the Change Management Grant.
- [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 Pharmacists' Association](#)

[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: Naloxone is made available in Ontario without a prescription as a Schedule II drug when indicated for emergency use for opioid overdose outside hospital settings.

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 returning 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](#)

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

[Ontario Naloxone Program for Pharmacies on Procurement of Naloxone kits OPA 2017 Professional Development Programs Line-up](#)

# Quebec

Naloxone is available without a prescription as a Schedule II drug in Quebec. It can be obtained through the provincial THN program or purchased at pharmacies.

## Publicly-funded Take-Home Naloxone (THN) Program

On November 10, 2017, free THN kits became available to the public in 1,900 community pharmacies across Quebec. Naloxone will be distributed freely to anyone age 14 and older with a valid health card. Special exceptions will be made for people “in distress” who do not have a health card. Pharmacists will be able to provide a maximum of eight vials of naloxone, along with the syringes necessary to inject it to anyone who requests it. The program will be administered by the Quebec health insurance board, the Régie de l’assurance maladie du Québec.

Other program details are currently unknown.

## Purchasing Naloxone in Pharmacy

Insufficient information available.

## Cost to Patients

Insufficient information available.

## Patient Assessment and Education

Insufficient information available.

## Pharmacist Training and Resources

Insufficient information available.

## Documentation

Insufficient information available.

## Additional Information

[Crise des opioïdes - L'accès à la Naloxone sera gratuit pour tous](#)

# New Brunswick

Naloxone is now available without a prescription as a Schedule II drug in New Brunswick and can be purchased at pharmacies.

## 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.

## 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 injection is moved to Schedule II status when indicated for emergency use for opioid overdose outside hospital settings. Naloxone becomes available in community pharmacies without a prescription.

## 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.

The new THN program [began](#) on September 29, 2017 and includes 240 pharmacies in Nova Scotia. Participating community pharmacies provide free naloxone kits to individuals who are at risk for opioid overdose or are likely to witness and respond to an overdose (such as family/friends and those who work with people at risk of opioid overdose). Individuals do not need a Nova Scotia Health Card number to receive a kit.

## Purchasing Naloxone in Pharmacy

Outside the THN program, patients may purchase naloxone at community pharmacies.

## Cost to Patients

Insufficient information available.

## 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 to Schedule II status when indicated for emergency use for opioid overdose outside hospital settings. Naloxone becomes available in community pharmacies without a prescription.

## 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 purchase 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 injection is moved to Schedule II status when indicated for emergency use for opioid overdose outside hospital settings. Naloxone becomes available in community pharmacies without a prescription.

## 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 purchase 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.

## 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](#)

# About CPhA

The Canadian Pharmacists Association (CPhA) is the uniting national voice of pharmacy and the pharmacist profession in Canada. As pharmacists undertake an enhanced role in the delivery of health care services, CPhA ensures that the profession is recognized as a national leader in health care, influencing the policies, programs, budgets and initiatives affecting the profession and the health of Canadians.

More information is available at [www.pharmacists.ca](http://www.pharmacists.ca).

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