

What Can Pharmacists Do Under the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act (CDSA) During the COVID-19 Pandemic?

In order to support the continuity of patient care during COVID-19, Health Canada made [several temporary exemptions to the CDSA](#) that allow pharmacists to extend/renew, adapt, transfer, delegate deliveries and accept verbal orders for prescriptions of opioids or other controlled substances.

Most jurisdictions have incorporated these activities into their pharmacists' scope of practice, and some have also now authorized the ability for pharmacists to adapt prescriptions for controlled substances (already permitted under the CDSA).



Extend/Renew Prescriptions



Adapt Prescriptions
(adjust dose, regimen or formulation; taper or stop)



Transfer Prescriptions



Direct Pharmacy Staff to Deliver Prescriptions



Accept Verbal Orders for Prescriptions

*Please refer to CPhA's latest "[COVID-19 and CDSA chart](#)" for an overview of authorized activities by jurisdiction.

EXAMPLE: Accepting a Verbal Order in British Columbia



Steve is a pharmacist in British Columbia who practices in a community setting.

HB, one of Steve's patients, is a 62-year old female on methadone 110 mg PO daily. She presents to the pharmacy with withdrawal symptoms (sweating, shakes, loose bowels). She self increased her dose and ran out of methadone two days ago.



She does not have any more methadone left and requires a new prescription, but her prescriber's office is closed. How will HB get more methadone?

Under the CDSA exemptions and provincial regulation, Steve can now accept a verbal order. To do so, Steve:

- Identifies any potential drug related problems (i.e., appropriateness of dose)
- Must contact the prescriber to discuss HB's condition as she has self-increased
- Must document the verbal authorization including:
 - Pharmacist's signature or initials
 - Name of practitioner providing the verbal order
 - Practitioner's college identification number

* the pharmacy must receive the original prescription from the practitioner as soon as reasonably possible



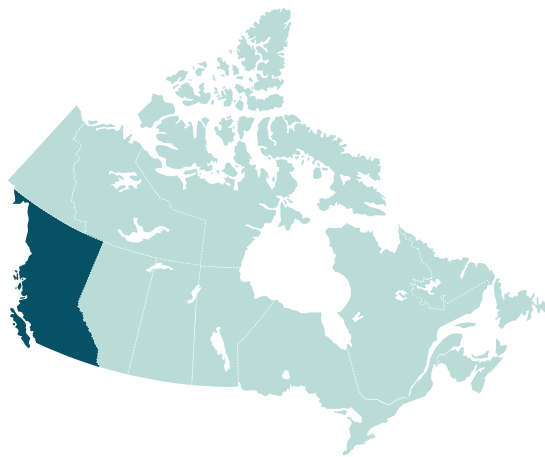
Outcome:



- Steve receives a verbal order from the prescriber and provides HB with enough methadone until the next time the prescriber can assess HB
- Steve will follow up with HB in the next few days, monitoring for withdrawal symptoms



HB can receive her medication, enabling continuity of care.



Before the CDSA Exemptions:

- ☒ Pharmacists were not permitted to accept verbal orders for opioid agonist therapy
- ☒ Patients would need to visit their prescriber for a medical assessment and if appropriate, a new written prescription



After the CDSA Exemptions:

- ☒ Pharmacists are permitted to accept verbal orders for new opioid related prescriptions
- * note: pharmacists are also permitted to provide an emergency supply through extending/renewing OAT prescriptions in British Columbia
- ☒ Patients can continue their medication regimen without interruption



Please note: the CDSA exemptions are subject to provincial or territorial legislation.

For more information, please consult with your Provincial Regulatory Authority or local ministry of health and/or visit the [CPhA website](#) for resources.