

# 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, 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: Transferring a Prescription in New Brunswick

**Henry is a pharmacist in New Brunswick who practices in a community setting.**

WK, one of Henry's patients, is a 30-year old male on methylphenidate 30 mg PO BID. He will be travelling to the other side of the province (from Fredericton to Bathurst) to care for his elderly mother. However, when WK is in Bathurst, he will be due for a methylphenidate refill.

**WK will be gone for 2 weeks. How will WK get his medication if he can't visit his regular pharmacy?**

**Under the CDSA exemptions and provincial regulation, Henry can now transfer his prescription to another pharmacy in the province. To carry out the transfer, Henry:**

- Ensures WK is under his professional care
- Identifies any potential drug related problems (i.e., appropriateness of dose)
- Determines location of the new pharmacy to confirm the pharmacy is within the same province
- Reviews safe opioid storage and disposal with WK

**Outcome:**

- Henry transfers the prescription to another pharmacy in Bathurst, NB through fax
- Henry includes pertinent information including:
  - Last dispensed date

**WK can obtain methylphenidate from his new pharmacy while he is away.**



**Before the CDSA Exemptions:**

- ☒ Pharmacists were not permitted to transfer controlled drugs
- ☒ Patients would need to go back to their regular pharmacy or get a new prescription from a new prescriber



**After the CDSA Exemptions:**

- ☒ Pharmacists are permitted to transfer controlled drugs to another pharmacy within the same province
- ☒ Patients can pick up controlled drugs in a more convenient location



**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.