

CDSA AND THE CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES REGULATIONS

 Authority  No authority  Limited  Pending legislation, regulation, or policy for implementation

On September 30, 2026, the Subsection 56(1) class exemption for patients, practitioners and pharmacists prescribing and providing controlled substances in Canada that was implemented in response to the COVID-19 pandemic will be revoked. The exemption will be replaced by the updated Controlled Substances Regulations (CSR) that will come into effect on October 1, 2026. The new CSR will continue to permit pharmacists to extend, renew, or transfer an existing prescription of a controlled substance and will authorize pharmacists to therapeutically substitute one controlled substance for another, where permitted under provincial or territorial scope of practice. Under the subsection 56(1) class exemption, pharmacists practicing outside of a hospital are permitted to administer a controlled substance, if authorized under the laws of the province or territory where the administration occurs, and only for a patient that has a valid prescription for that substance. For full guidance on the new CSR, we recommend consulting Health Canada. Below is an overview of how pharmacists are authorized to manage prescriptions for controlled drugs and substances across Canada by jurisdiction.

	BC	AB	SK	MB	ON	QC	NB	NS	PE	NL	YT	NT	NU
Therapeutic Substitution						 ¹							
Accept verbal orders				 ²									
Accept orders by fax		 ³			 ³	 ³	 ³		 ³	 ³	 ³		
Transfer Rx to another pharmacist												 ⁴	
Extend/renew Rx	 ⁵	 ⁶			 ^{7,8}			 ⁶					
Change drug formulation, dose and regimen, etc. ⁹	 ¹⁰	 ¹¹			 ⁷	 ¹⁰							
Deliver Rx													
Administer controlled substance ¹²					 ¹³	 ¹⁴							

1. Permitted as of October 1, 2026, following the amendment to the Controlled Substances Regulations.
2. Verbal orders may only be accepted by pharmacists for residents of a personal care home.
3. Pharmacists can always accept faxed orders for medications under the CDSA.
4. Only if there is a shortage of the prescribed substance at the transferring pharmacy.
5. Prescriptions for narcotics, controlled drugs or targeted substances may be renewed up to the same duration as prescribed or for 30 days, whichever is greater.
6. Some limitations in place with regard to indications for treatment.
7. Prior to adapting or renewing, pharmacists are expected to collaborate with the prescriber. If collaboration is not possible, pharmacists may proceed with the adaptation or renewal for continuity of care and notify the prescriber within a reasonable period of time.
8. Ontario pharmacists may refill a prescription for a benzodiazepine or other targeted substance if more than one year has elapsed since the date it was written.
9. Pharmacists may not increase the dose of prescribed controlled substances independently, except in Quebec.
10. The quantity dispensed must not exceed the amount authorized in the prescription. Prior to adaptation, pharmacists must consult the patient and patients records to determine correct treatment.
11. Only applies to pharmacists who obtain Additional Prescribing Authority.
12. Requirements, such as obtaining additional practice authority or training, may vary by province.
13. For patient education and demonstration only.
14. Permitted for teaching purposes. Will be permitted for therapeutic purposes as of December 9, 2026 (covered only for individuals who are unable to self-inject because of cognitive issues or physical or sensory disabilities).

CPhA does not guarantee the accuracy of the information contained above.
Please consult the provincial regulations and practice guidance available through the provincial regulatory authorities.