



Canadian  
Pharmacists  
Association

Association des  
pharmaciens  
du Canada

# The Weekly

Bringing the world of pharmacy together

## October 19, 2022

### CPhA

#### ***CPhA provides guidance and options on kids' pain medications supply issues***

With the start of fall and winter season up ahead when respiratory viruses typically surge, Canadian parents may have to explore other ways to manage their kids' pain and fever as supply continues to fall short of high demand, experts [told Global News](#). "Not having a product to treat a fever itself will affect a large part of the larger childhood population because we're seeing it across the country. We're seeing it in all cities," said Barry Power, editor-in-chief at CPhA and a pharmacist in Ottawa. Acetaminophen, which is found in products such as Tylenol or Tempra, and ibuprofen, which goes in Advil or Motrin, are typically given as a "comfort measure" to children when they have a fever, sore throat or aches and pains. In most cases among children, medications are not needed as the fever goes away within 24 hours or so, Power said. But there are also a number of ways to manage the symptoms at home without medicines, such as giving ice water, ice chips or freezies to children who are old enough to help manage their fever—and also making sure they have enough fluids, Power stated. As the shortage persists, both the Canadian Paediatric Society and CPhA say parents should buy only what is needed so there is enough supply to go around for others who might require it.

## ***CPhA warns about vaccine complacency as flu season ramps up***

Relatively low circulation of the flu over the past 2 years puts young children at greater risk than usual of catching it this fall and winter, according to experts who also fear fewer pandemic measures and reduced vaccination uptake will further spread, [CBC reports](#). Pandemic measures to limit COVID-19 spread led to just 69 confirmed flu cases during the 2020–2021 season and only sporadic cases in 2021–2022, according to a recent update from the National Advisory Committee on Immunization, which advises the Public Health Agency of Canada on vaccine use. The pool of potential flu patients this fall and winter is greater, just as masks and distancing rules have dropped, according to McMaster University immunologist Dawn Bowdish. Meanwhile, Danielle Paes, CPhA's chief pharmacist officer, said waning interest in the flu shot could also exacerbate the impact this season. Paes points to a survey of 1500 adults in August that found only 50% of respondents said they would get a flu shot this year, down 6 points from a survey in 2021.

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## **Pharmacy on the front lines**

### ***Cape Breton pharmacist wary of vaccination fatigue***

A Cape Breton pharmacist is urging residents not to fall victim to vaccination fatigue, [SaltWire reports](#). Michael Hatt, the owner of The Medicine Shoppe pharmacy in Port Hawkesbury, Nova Scotia, said he harbours concerns that some people will pass on a flu shot this season because they may be tired of being jabbed in the arm after several rounds of COVID-19 vaccination injections. "I think we are going to see that people are a little overrun with vaccinations," Hatt said. "Last year we did see a drop in the number of people taking flu vaccines and I think it's vaccine overload and that's unfortunate as we hope that everybody who needs one and wants one will get one. Some people are on their fourth or fifth COVID vaccination now and I think it's a case of people being tired of getting poked." Hatt also encourages people who don't think they need a flu shot to reconsider, as even if they don't get sick, they can pass the flu on to more vulnerable members of society. "Not everybody necessarily needs a flu shot to prevent getting the flu, but they should consider others in making their decision," he said. "The issue is passing it on to somebody who is frail or has a weakened immune system. So, the fear is that somebody who is strong enough to fend off the flu might pass it along to

somebody who doesn't have a fighting chance. It could be fatal or cause serious illness."

### ***Pharmacist brings flu shots to the Lethbridge Soup Kitchen***

To mark the start of Alberta's annual influenza immunization campaign on October 17, Lethbridge pharmacist Vishal Sukhadiya spent the day offering flu shots to people visiting the Lethbridge Soup Kitchen, [My Lethbridge Now reports](#). He said it's important to help people experiencing homelessness access the flu shot because they are often more vulnerable to severe outcomes if they get sick. This isn't the first time Sukhadiya has visited the soup kitchen with flu shots. In previous years, Sukhadiya said he saw 25 to 30% of people accessing the soup kitchen get the flu shot. "It is hard to convince them, but they are the most vulnerable group," he said. "You just try your best and that's all you do, but I think that even if we [administer] 1 shot, I think we will save 1 life." Sukhadiya added that he believes if he goes every year, people will become more receptive to getting immunized against the flu.

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## **Provincial**

### ***Toronto pharmacists sound alarm as armed robberies more than double***

Armed robberies targeting Toronto-area pharmacies have more than doubled since 2021, as gun-toting gangs looking for drugs to sell are repeatedly raiding part of our health-care system, [according to CTV News](#). Pharmacists across Ontario say they are seeing robberies happen almost every day—sometimes multiple times a day. The fear the thieves will not let up is pushing some in the business to contemplate abandoning careers of helping patients. "I don't know what to do at this point. It's scary coming to work," said Michael Malak, who has been a pharmacist in Etobicoke for 10 years. "We're hearing about this almost every day, sometimes multiple times a day, from pharmacists all across Ontario," said Sherif Guorgui of OnPharm-United, a network of independent pharmacy owners. Police and pharmacists have issued warnings as far west as Calgary, saying the pills can play a role in overdose deaths. "Retail crime and that includes pharmacy robberies specifically continues to be a problem nationwide," said Angeline Ng, vice-president of professional affairs with the Ontario Pharmacists Association. "In Ontario, we have the largest pharmacy

losses of opioids and that includes things like codeine, fentanyl and hydromorphone and oxycodone. These drugs are then introduced onto the street and sold for illicit use and helps fuel the opioid crisis that we have here in Canada.”

### ***Pharmacy Plus PEI program adds 48 new locations for Islanders to access health care***

A new program offered through community pharmacies across Prince Edward Island will provide Islanders with new options for timely, routine, non-urgent health concerns in 48 locations in 16 communities across the province, [according to a news release from the province](#). “We are pleased to be partnering with the province to launch the Pharmacy Plus PEI program. This program will enable pharmacists to do more to help meet the growing demand for convenient, accessible health care services in communities right across the province,” said Erin MacKenzie, executive director of the PEI Pharmacists Association. Through the Pharmacy Plus PEI program, pharmacists can assess and prescribe, free of charge, for 32 common ailments, including cough, sore throat, seasonal allergies, heartburn, minor joint pain, thrush, and skin conditions like eczema and acne. In addition to assessing and prescribing for common ailments, community pharmacists can renew eligible prescriptions.

### ***BC’s opioid legislation amended to support lawsuit***

BC is introducing amendments that would allow the federal government to join a BC-led class-action lawsuit against opioid manufacturers and permit the expansion of the number of defendants, [according to a news release](#). “BC led the country in holding opioid manufacturers and distributors accountable, and today BC is expanding its opioid litigation legislation,” said Sheila Malcolmson, minister of mental health and addictions. “Nothing will ever replace the lives lost in our province, but we keep using every tool in our toolbox—from prevention to safe supply to treatment—to turn the tide on this terrible crisis.” Amendments to the *Opioid Damages and Health Care Costs Recovery Act* will enable the governments of BC and Canada to pursue recovery from opioid manufacturers, wholesalers and other potential defendants in a class-action lawsuit that is in progress. The amendments will strengthen the act by ensuring directors and officers of corporate defendants may also be held accountable.

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## National

### ***Canada supports international co-operation on antimicrobial resistance***

The Public Health Agency of Canada has [announced](#) a \$300,000 contribution to help address antimicrobial resistance (AMR)—an urgent and growing threat to global health that costs our health-care system \$1.4 billion every year. The funding supports SECURE, a newly created initiative with the mission to expand access to essential, life-saving antibiotics for countries and populations in need, and ensuring their appropriate use. “Canada’s contribution to SECURE’s initiative will increase global AMR preparedness and support improved access to the antimicrobials upon which people around the world rely every day,” Minister of Health Jean-Yves Duclos said in a news release. The funding announcement comes ahead of [World Antimicrobial Awareness Week](#), which runs from November 18 to 24. This year’s theme is Preventing Antimicrobial Resistance Together. “It’s a good reminder that we can all play a part to help address AMR,” Duclos said.

### ***1.4 million Canadians have experienced prolonged COVID-19 symptoms: StatsCan***

Around 1.4 million Canadian adults who know or suspect they’ve had COVID-19 say they experienced symptoms months after getting sick, according to new data released on October 17 by Statistics Canada, [Global News reports](#). The data, released in partnership with the Public Health Agency of Canada, is the first national look at Canadians who experienced long-term symptoms after a positive COVID-19 test or suspected infection. It was gathered through the second cycle of Statistics Canada’s [Canadian COVID-19 Antibody and Health Survey](#). As of the end of May 2022, almost one-third of Canadians aged 18 years and older had tested positive for COVID-19 and another 8.3% suspected they had the virus, according to the survey results. Of those who know or believe they were infected, 14.8%—or 1.4 million Canadians—said they had symptoms for at least 3 months after their initial infection. Fatigue was the most common symptom, experienced by almost three-quarters of those with long-term symptoms, followed by cough and shortness of breath at 39% and brain fog at 33%.

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# International

## ***US: FDA confirms Adderall shortage***

After weeks of individual reports of frustration with getting Adderall prescriptions filled, the Food and Drug Administration [confirmed](#) last week a nationwide shortage of the immediate release formulation of amphetamine mixed salts, commonly referred to by the brand name Adderall. Adderall is a stimulant medication that can treat ADHD. It requires a prescription and as a controlled substance, supply is strictly monitored and distribution is limited. Teva Pharmaceuticals, the largest maker of generic Adderall in the US, [told ABC News](#) that “the supply that we are manufacturing/distributing right now is on pace to be consistent—or greater than—our supply at this time last year by the end of this year. The demand is not.” The company said it’s experiencing “intermittent backorders” as a significant rise in national prescription rates can cause some constraints to product availability. Teva said disruptions will only be “temporary” and expects inventory to recover within months. Major retail pharmacies like CVS and Walgreens have also noted supply chain constraints. A CVS spokesperson told ABC News they are “aware of intermittent shortages of generic amphetamine medication in the supply chain,” adding that their pharmacists “will work with patients who are prescribed this medication as needed.”

## ***US: Walgreens, CVS pharmacists withholding abortion medications***

The nation’s 2 largest pharmacies, Walgreens and CVS, have updated their company policies to allow their pharmacists to deny medication to people who they think could be circumventing new abortion laws by causing a miscarriage, [USA Today reports](#). Walgreens allows pharmacists to use their professional discretion when prescribing medication that could run contrary to local prohibitions on abortion, said Fraser Engerman, a spokesperson for Walgreens Boots Alliance. Mike DeAngelis, executive director for corporate communications at CVS, said the company requires its pharmacists to confirm a medication will not be used to terminate a pregnancy before it will fill a drug. The American Medical Association, American Pharmacists Association and several other pharmacy groups put out [a statement](#) in September urging state policymakers to examine their state abortion laws to ensure that access to necessary medication and patient care are protected.

## ***US: Hearing aids are now available over the counter at Walgreens, CVS***

Millions of Americans with hearing loss can now purchase hearing aids from Walgreens, CVS, and other retailers without a prescription or medical exam, according to the companies, [CNBC reports](#). Walgreens started selling over-the-counter hearing aids online and at its stores nationwide for US\$799 a pair on October 17. By comparison, the average cost of prescription hearing aids can range between US\$2,000 and \$8,000, according to the company. On the CVS website, prices range from US\$199 to \$999. The drug store chain will also start offering them at select US pharmacy locations beginning in November. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) issued a rule in August that allowed over-the-counter sales of hearing aids for adults ages 18 and older with mild to moderate hearing loss. People with severe hearing loss and children still need prescriptions for the devices. The FDA, in an analysis, estimated that purchasing over-the-counter hearing aids could save consumers about US\$1,438 each because they are not bundled with costly professional services.

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## **Worth Repeating**

“At some point, it becomes irresponsible of the government to not use this resource that they have in front of them when people are going without care” —Kara O’Keefe, a pharmacist working on Bell Island, Newfoundland and Labrador, [on the large role pharmacists could play](#) in alleviating the province’s health-care problems

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This weekly update is compiled by the Canadian Pharmacists Association. Please note that this publication is meant to inform and is not a comprehensive list of information available. Be sure to check with your provincial regulatory authority or advocacy association for province-specific information. While we aim to ensure all information contained in this update is accurate, the situation is evolving rapidly and CPhA does not take responsibility for the content provided by other organizations and sources.