



Canadian
Pharmacists
Association

Association des
pharmaciens
du Canada

The Weekly

Bringing the world of pharmacy together

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CPhA

Nitroglycerin spray shortage: Information and resources for pharmacy professionals

There is a severe shortage of nitroglycerin spray in Canada due to raw material supply issues for the predominant manufacturer (Mylan) and subsequent increases in demand for other marketed products (Sandoz and Sanofi). As the availability of nitroglycerin spray is expected to be extremely limited for the next few months, CPhA is recommending that pharmacists across Canada limit the dispensing of these products as much as possible to conserve supply throughout the shortage, as well as protect against possible stockpiling. Barry Power, CPhA's editor-in-chief, [told Global News](#) that the closest alternative—nitroglycerin tablets—are in limited supply because they are no longer widely used. CPhA continues to work with Health Canada and other stakeholders to represent front-line pharmacists and ensure they are updated on the situation so they can appropriately manage the Tier 3 shortage and support their patients. We have published a [webpage](#) about the shortage and a [Q&A resource](#) for pharmacy professionals that we will continue to update as the shortage situation evolves.

CPhA: Supply issues still plague kids' pain medicine, antibiotics

Parents on the hunt for children's pain medicine or antibiotics in Canada may still be out of luck, as supply shortages continue to put a strain on some pharmacies, according to experts. Although the supply of children's pediatric medication has stabilized since 2022, these drugs can still be hard to find, Danielle Paes, CPhA's chief pharmacist officer, [told Global News](#). "When it comes to the shortage of specifically children's acetaminophen and ibuprofen, it appears the worse is behind us," she said. "However, we are still having supply challenges. So, I would say to parents and caregivers, if you go to the pharmacy and the medication isn't on the shelf, talk to the pharmacist as it's possible that maybe they'll have it behind the counter . . . or [you can] talk about alternatives you can buy." Paes said parents may have to shop around as it's still a hit or miss if pharmacy shelves are stocked with the needed pain reliever or antibiotic. "You may still have to hunt for it, but generally speaking, [the situation] has improved considerably since the past fall."

Applications open for the IPPC Indigenous Pharmacy Scholarship!

The [Indigenous Pharmacy Professionals of Canada](#) (IPPC) and CPhA are thrilled to announce the launch of the new IPPC Indigenous Pharmacy Scholarship. With both PharmD and technician scholarships available for the 2023/2024 academic year, this funding will help reduce financial barriers for Indigenous youth interested in pursuing a career in pharmacy. Applications are now being accepted and the deadline to apply is April 30. Thank you to our founding sponsors, Johnson & Johnson, Shoppers Drug Mart, Green Shield Canada and Sobeys National Pharmacy Group, for their generous support of the IPPC Indigenous Pharmacy Scholarship. [Apply now](#).

CPhA represents pharmacy profession at meeting of Coalition for Action for Health Workers

On March 20, CPhA participated in a Coalition for Action for Health Workers meeting with Minister of Health Jean-Yves Duclos and Minister of Mental Health and Addictions Carolyn Bennett, which brought together health-care representatives to discuss priorities to address long-standing health workforce challenges. Critical elements to tackling the current health workforce crisis were discussed, such as recruitment, retention, and strengthening health workforce data to support planning and the importance of innovation and new models of care. Pharmacists were specifically named as part of the federal government's vision for health-care system transformation and enhancing

team-based care. CPhA will continue to represent the voice of Canada's pharmacy professionals in this forum and advocate for further funding and support for community care. Following the meeting, Duclos and Bennett [issued a statement](#) highlighting the important role of Canada's health-care workers and reiterating the aim of the coalition.

Tell us how you're doing in the 2023 Canadian Pharmacy Mental Health and Workforce Wellness Survey

Have you completed the 2023 edition of the Canadian Pharmacy Mental Health and Workforce Wellness Survey? The results from the 2022 survey have guided our efforts to support the profession over the past year, including the formation of a [Pharmacy Wellness Task Force](#) and Workforce Steering Committee. It's been a year and we're checking in again to see how you're doing. We need to understand what you're experiencing now so that we can continue to advocate on your behalf and share the impact that workplace and staffing challenges are having on you and your team. The deadline for the 2023 edition of the survey has been extended. Please take the survey in [English](#) or [French](#).

CPhA's CPO on PAM and the evolving role of pharmacy through the pandemic

In the latest [CPO Conversations](#) blog post, CPhA's Chief Pharmacist Officer, Dr. Danielle Paes, reflects on Pharmacy Appreciation Month (PAM) and the change from awareness to appreciation, the evolution of the profession through the pandemic, and the steps we need to take next to continue to advance the role of pharmacy in health care. "More and more Canadians are recognizing that pharmacists are equipped with knowledge and skills to help to support them with their health needs, and not just in the context of filling a prescription," she writes. "Whether it's as a prescriber, an immunizer or a first point of contact for the health-care system, pharmacists are being seen by patients as a valuable health-care resource in their communities."

PAM celebrations continue: How you can participate

We're now in the third week of [Pharmacy Appreciation Month](#) (PAM) in Canada—the annual national campaign that shines a spotlight on all things pharmacy and celebrates the growing role pharmacy professionals play in our health-care

system. Throughout the month, we've been celebrating our pharmacy teams and highlighting to everyone that the power of pharmacy is you—the amazing individuals who have been there for their communities time and time again. Here's how you can help us celebrate:

- **Be part of our PAM campaign** – Want to be featured in our PAM materials on social media? [Email us](#) a picture of yourself or your pharmacy team in action, with the name and location (city and province/territory) of your pharmacy and the full names of any team members in the photo.
- **Celebrate your team on the PAM 2023 Kudoboard** – Share stories, photos, congratulations or thanks to your team and pharmacy colleagues for the incredible work they do every day on this [virtual appreciation wall](#).

For more information on how you can get involved, check out our [communications toolkit](#) and join the conversation on social media using the hashtag #PAM2023!

Pharmacy on the front lines

IPPC looks to tackle racism and support Indigenous pharmacy professionals

When the board of directors of the newly formed Indigenous Pharmacy Professionals of Canada (IPPC) held their first official meeting in early March, Jaris Swidrovich [told U of T News](#) he felt a sense of joy and optimism. Swidrovich, founder and chair of the IPPC and assistant professor at the University of Toronto's Leslie Dan Faculty of Pharmacy, has wanted to create a network for Indigenous pharmacy professionals since he was a student at the University of Saskatchewan in 2006. The IPPC now has a full slate of upcoming activities, partnerships within and outside the pharmacy profession, and federal funding to help address anti-Indigenous racism in Canada's health-care system. "For years, I and other Indigenous pharmacists have worked as individuals with organizations who needed an Indigenous partner for education or training," said Swidrovich, a member of Yellow Quill First Nation in Saskatchewan. The idea of the association began to solidify during

Swidrovich's PhD in education, when he interviewed Indigenous pharmacy students and graduates across the country about their experiences with pharmacy education. "Every person who participated in my study identified a feeling of isolation. We know there are quite a few Indigenous pharmacists across the country, but we don't know who or where they are," he said. "Each of us identified that it would be nice if we had a community and could see ourselves reflected in the profession, brainstorm ideas, and support each other."

Pressure remains on Calgary compounding pharmacies to produce children's medicine

Amoxicillin has been hard to find all fall and winter and remains a struggle to get a hold of, leaving parents to rely on compounding pharmacies for the antibiotic and other drugs that have been in short supply, [Global News reports](#). "Some parents take it in stride, but we've had some parents call us very frustrated," said Randy Howden, owner of the Crowfoot and Sunridge Medicine Shoppe Pharmacy & Compounding Centre. "I've had one parent come in in tears recently who had been to 3 different pharmacies and just couldn't find the medication for her child." Crowfoot Medicine Shoppe is a compounding pharmacy, meaning it has what's needed to mix and prepare specialty medications. With amoxicillin, for example, the only way to make the suspension is to open individual capsules, weigh and measure the right ingredients. "Other pharmacies are sending patients to us. They couldn't find any amoxicillin suspension or other antibiotics," said Howden, who is also president-elect of the Alberta Pharmacists' Association. "Right now I'm not able to order premade amoxicillin suspensions, so we are back to making it at this point in time. I don't know when that's going to change."

Provincial/Territorial

Ontario wants pharmacists authorized to prescribe for 6 more minor ailments

Just months after Ontario pharmacists became authorized to assess and prescribe for 13 minor ailments on January 1, 2023, the province's Health Ministry has asked the profession's regulator to make changes that would enable autonomous prescribing for 6 more conditions, [Canadian Healthcare](#)

[Network reports](#) (subscriber access only). “The Ministry [of Health] is asking for this to be done quickly—with urgency,” Susan James, director of quality for the Ontario College of Pharmacists, said at a March 21 board meeting. “This is a direct request from the Minister.” According to a slide presentation shared by the college during the meeting, the province would like pharmacists’ assessment and prescribing authority to also include mild to moderate acne, canker sores, diaper dermatitis, yeast infections, pinworms and threadworms, and nausea and vomiting in pregnancy. For these additions to take effect, the college would need to amend regulations to include the 6 additional conditions. “The regulatory change is strictly to add these 6 ailments to the schedule, along with the drugs that go along with that,” James said. As of the end of February, Ontario pharmacists had completed 86 000 assessments and issued about 70 000 prescriptions for minor ailments, James added, citing numbers provided by the province. The latter figure, she noted, is an indication that Ontario pharmacists do a good job of considering a wide range of interventions, not just prescribed medications.

Alberta-imported children’s pain medication a different concentration, requires education

Alberta parents looking for children’s pain medication now have access to an alternative, but details released by Alberta Blue Cross this month show the Turkish-manufactured liquid acetaminophen for kids is at a different concentration than what is normally approved by Canadian authorities, [Global News reports](#). The medication, which is [available at pharmacies](#) around the province as of March 21, is being sold under the “Parol” brand name. “Parol is a 24 mg/ml oral suspension, which comes in a 150 ml size child-resistant glass bottle with a graduated spoon and in an orange flavor,” Alberta Blue Cross wrote in a brief sent to pharmacists province-wide. “It is important to know that this differs from the Canadian-authorized product which comes in a concentration of 32 mg/ml and uses a different dosing device.” The memo goes on to say that Parol must be kept behind the counter and pharmacists are expected to educate parents and caregivers on the correct usage of the drug that got an emergency approval from federal authorities. “They want to make sure that parents are being properly educated about how to use a measuring spoon, what the dosage is, and make sure that it’s going to be dispensed in a safe manner,” said Randy Howden, president-elect of the Alberta Pharmacists’ Association. “It’s just different than what we’re used to seeing in Canada.”

NWT pharmacists flag ongoing shortage of cough medicine

If you are looking for cough medication in the Northwest Territories (NWT) right now, you might have trouble finding it. Pharmacists in Yellowknife, Inuvik and Fort Smith all [told CBC](#) they've been seeing shortages of cough medicine, as well as ongoing shortages of children's pain medication, infant formula and some prescription drugs. Julianne Fuller, a pharmacist with Ring's Pharmacy in Hay River, said she's been noticing shortages of cough medicine since November or December. "We have shortages of cough and cold products, we have shortages of . . . youth antibiotics, we have shortages of pain control meds. We have a variety of shortages that have been on and off over the last few months," Fuller said. Pharmacists across the country have been reporting medication shortages since last fall, especially for children's medication. Those shortages never really went away. In January, pharmacists elsewhere in Canada pointed to the fact that Canadian manufacturers have limited capacity to increase their production of cold and flu medication. Fuller said the shortages have changed how she does her job. NWT pharmacists generally source medication from wholesalers in Alberta, she noted. Before the shortages, she ordered new medication once a day, at most; now she checks suppliers' stock multiple times a day just to source common medication.

NS Health says naloxone missing from some overdose reversal kits sent to pharmacies

Nova Scotia Health is warning that some naloxone kits distributed through pharmacies do not contain the drug needed to reverse the effects of opioid overdose, [CBC reports](#). Each kit is supposed to contain needles, instructions and other materials, along with 2 doses of naloxone in a plastic pill bottle. Ashlie Cormier, provincial manager for prevention and health promotion in mental health and addictions, said a problem with some kits was discovered early on March 20 and the health authority is trying to figure out how it happened and how widespread it is. "It's really too soon for us to know exactly how many kits are involved and what I can tell you that's most important to us is that we get the information out there to the community as soon as possible, because even 1 kit that's out there that's missing naloxone is too many," she said. The kits contain the life-saving drug and have been available free at pharmacies across the province since 2017. Cormier urged people to open their kit and check the contents. If it does not contain naloxone, she said they should return it to the pharmacy for a replacement.

National

Health Canada launches new toll-free number for poison centres

Health Canada has launched a new toll-free number, 1-844-POISON-X, or 1-844-764-7669, to help people across the country access critical medical advice related to poisonings more easily, [CTV News reports](#). The agency made the announcement in a news release on March 20, marking National Poison Prevention Week. Health Canada said over 1500 people die annually due to unintentional poisoning from medication, cleaners, cannabis products and other household items, and accidental poisonings are a leading cause of preventable injury and death in Canada. “Accidental poisonings can happen to anyone at any time—including from over-the-counter medicines, prescription drugs, illicit substances, alcohol and cannabis,” Minister of Mental Health and Addictions Carolyn Bennett said in the news release. “This new toll-free number will help to save lives, while also helping more Canadians access quality, timely, and evidence-based poison prevention education and related health care expertise.” The current provincial numbers regarding poisoning will remain in service and Canadians can continue using them in addition to the new toll-free number, Health Canada said. Calling the toll-free number will connect Canadians to their local poison centre, regardless of their location.

International

US: APhA applauds new federal bipartisan PBM legislation

The American Pharmacists Association (APhA) has [applauded](#) the introduction of the *Drug Price Transparency in Medicaid Act*, which will reign in the unfair and anticompetitive business practices of pharmacy benefit managers (PBMs) that it believes are harming the viability of the country’s pharmacies. This bipartisan legislation provides greater accountability and oversight of PBMs and their actions, while addressing practices of spread pricing secrecy in Medicaid, which occurs when a PBM charges the state or health plan more than they pay the pharmacy for a medication and then keeps the “spread” as a profit, often reimbursing the pharmacy for less than their cost to acquire the drug. “APhA strongly supports this legislation to eliminate one of PBMs’

harmful business practices that is increasing drug costs at the expense of Medicaid patients and creating ‘pharmacy deserts’ in minority and underserved communities, where the neighborhood pharmacy may be the only health care provider for miles,” said Ilisa Bernstein, APhA’s interim executive vice-president and CEO. “It’s way past time to put patients over PBM profits, and Congressional action is overdue. APhA will continue working with both federal and state policymakers to restore transparency, accountability, and equity to the health care marketplace.” In a [recent survey](#) of pharmacists conducted by APhA, 82% of respondents agreed that spread pricing impacts their pharmacy and the patient care they provide.

Australia: Guild sees spike in demand for immunization training

Changes to legislation authorizing pharmacists in Queensland to administer influenza vaccines to children aged 6 months and older is fuelling a spike in demand for immunization training, according to the Pharmacy Guild of Australia (PGA). Chris Owen, the PGA’s Queensland branch president, [told the *Australian Journal of Pharmacy*](#) (subscriber access only) that pharmacists have been looking to boost their immunization skills in response to the expansion of pharmacists’ scope of practice to include administering vaccines to kids. “From our point of view, we’ve had an increase in [inquiries] as to the vaccination course,” Owen said. “We need to make sure that . . . they’ve got confidence within their own ability that can then provide confidence to the parents of the children they’re vaccinating.” While welcoming the expanded authority, Owen said PGA would like to see pharmacists able to administer “all vaccines to all people across jurisdictions.” He said Queensland is still behind other states, especially New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory, which allow pharmacists to administer pretty much all vaccines aside from Japanese encephalitis. “We’ll constantly push for harmony across jurisdictions and to be able to provide all these vaccines to all people,” he added.

Worth Repeating

“It’s clear the contributions of our pharmacy department over the past few years have been remarkable. From supporting our community through the pandemic, providing lifesaving treatment, and managing drug shortages, our pharmacy professionals have been an immense force.” —Jeanette Despatie, the CEO of Cornwall Community Hospital in Cornwall, Ontario, celebrates the

hospital's pharmacy team in a Pharmacy Appreciation Month [column for the Kingston Whig-Standard](#)

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.

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