




Medication coverage in emergency situations



During emergencies, such as extreme weather events, pandemics or evacuations, access to essential medications becomes an urgent priority. This resource summarizes how emergency medication coverage is handled across Canada. Please check with your provincial/territorial regulatory body to confirm details as required.

Provincial/territorial considerations

- Pharmacist scope of practice and medication coverage varies by province/territory, and some services may not be reimbursed if provided out of province.
- Refer to a virtual care provider if pharmacist assessment/prescribing is not possible.
- Follow emergency supply policies if applicable to your region.

Province	Prescriptive authority in emergencies	Emergency supply policy information	Emergency drug coverage through provincial plans
British Columbia		A pharmacist in good faith may furnish a drug without prescription in reasonable quantities during a declared state of emergency to further the health and safety of the public. Caring for Patients During a State of Emergency (CPBC) Emergency Supply for Continuity of Care (CPBC)	PharmaCare program allows emergency fills and waives certain approval requirements. 5.2 Refilling Prescriptions Too Soon Policy (BC gov) 5.3 Refilling Prescriptions on the Same Day Policy (BC gov)
Alberta		A pharmacist may prescribe and dispense emergency medications under specific circumstances outlined in the Standards of Practice for Pharmacists and Pharmacy Technicians. What's an emergency? Council approves new standards (ACP)	Alberta Blue Cross covers replacement prescription due to damage of original prescription because of a natural disaster using UF code. Enhancing the early refill authorization process (ABC)
Saskatchewan		A pharmacist with Level 1 Prescribing Authority may prescribe a quantity of drug sufficient to meet the reasonable needs of a patient until such a time as the patient, with the exercise of reasonable diligence, would be able to consult a practitioner. Reference Manual: Level I Prescribing Authority (Practitioner-initiated) (SCP)	One time emergency access available through Ministry of Health (Drug Plan branch) during office hours and up to a four-day supply of covered drug products outside the regular office hours. Emergency Assistance for Prescription Drugs Extended Benefits and Drug Plan (SK gov)

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Manitoba	✓	No standard authority for emergency prescriptions. Emergency continued care prescriptions are only permissible during the period of a declared emergency and when patients cannot obtain their medication by accessing a refill or continued care prescription from their usual pharmacy. Emergency Preparedness Resource Kit for Pharmacists (CPhM)	Manitoba pharmacare supports emergency access. Claims Submission Procedure – Dispensing Frequency (MB gov)
Ontario	✓	All pharmacists can renew/adapt; in emergencies can administer first-aid substances. Pharmacist Prescribing: Initiating, Adapting and Renewing Prescriptions (OCP)	Ontario Drug Benefit (ODB) program has supported emergency access, including waiving refill timing restrictions. Ontario Drug Programs Reference Manual (ON gov)
Quebec	✓	Pharmacists may extend/renew/adapt & emergency prescribing under scope. Regulation respecting the initiation and modification of medication therapy, the administration of a medication and the prescription of tests by a pharmacist (Légis Québec)	There is no special RAMQ policy that automatically expands coverage for disasters, such as when evacuation forces you out of province.
New Brunswick	✓	Pharmacists can prescribe emergency supply if prescriber not reachable. Regulations of the New Brunswick College of Pharmacists (July 24, 2025) (NBCP)	Prescription renewals by a pharmacist may be eligible for coverage by the Department of Health in urgent situations where neither the patient nor the pharmacist is able to obtain a prescription from the patient's primary care provider. Prescription Renewals by Pharmacists (NB gov)
Newfoundland and Labrador	✓	Pharmacists can prescribe emergency supply if the prescriber is not reachable. Pharmacy Regulations (NLR 62/24) under the Pharmacy Act, 2024 (CPNL)	The Newfoundland and Labrador Prescription Drug Program (NLPDP) will cover an interim supply of medication as long as it is limited to the minimum amount needed for the beneficiary to reach their prescriber or regular pharmacy. This supply is typically less than a full refill and should be billed using intervention code MK. NL Prescription Drug Program: Reminder of Claim Submissions for Interim Supply and Adapting a Prescription (NL gov)

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Nova Scotia	✓	Pharmacists may prescribe for minor ailments, including during emergency scenarios. Standards of Practice: Prescribing Drugs	Pharmacies may bill DHW for prescription renewal services when required to ensure the continuity of care for patients during an emergency pharmacy closure. Nova Scotia Pharmacy Guide (NS gov)
Prince Edward Island (PEI)	✓	A pharmacist may give an emergency prescription, other than a monitored drug, to a patient under specific circumstances outlined in the Regulated Health Professions Act. PEI Reg EC532/14 Practice of Pharmacists and Pharmacy Technicians Regulations (CanLII)	There is no automatic emergency or disaster clause in PEI pharmacare.
Northwest Territories	✓	A pharmacist may issue a continued care prescription, other than for a controlled substance, for up to a 90-day supply under a state of public health emergency and where the Chief Public Health Officer considers it reasonably necessary to take actions to ensure access to drugs and medication and to protect the public health. In such circumstances, the normal 30-day continued care limit is removed and some other conditions do not apply. Pharmacy Act: Continued Care Prescriptions Regulations (NWT gov)	Pharmacy must retain supplemental documentation to support dispensing frequency when chronic or long-term medications are dispensed for less than a 90-to-100-day supply. No specific provisions are made for disasters or emergencies under GNWT Extended Health Benefits.
Nunavut	✗	Pharmacists do not have prescribing rights under any circumstances under current <i>Pharmacy Act</i> .	85% of Nunavummiut are covered by the federal NIHB plan; refer to NIHB for details. Nunavut Extended Health Benefits policy does not have any specific provisions for disasters or emergencies.
Yukon	✓	Pharmacists are authorized to extend prescriptions, including controlled substances, up to two times. During a declared emergency, pharmacists may provide emergency supplies of controlled substances (including opioids, stimulants, depressants, and methadone/suboxone), accept verbal orders, and transfer prescriptions provincially or interprovincially. Delivery of controlled substances by pharmacists or their delegates is also permitted. These authorities were introduced during COVID-19 and later made permanent. Yukoners to benefit from additional services Yukon pharmacists can now offer (YK gov) Regulation to amend the pharmacists regulation (YK gov)	While Yukon does not have a stand-alone emergency drug coverage program, pharmacists' authority to extend, adapt, and deliver prescriptions ensures continued patient access during emergencies. Emergency extension and delivery practices apply during officially declared states of emergency.

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Emergency drug coverage through federal drug plans

Plan name	Policy	Contact info
Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Pharmacy providers can dispense an emergency supply of medication for up to 14 days without prior approval.Contact NIHB regional office for back-dated approval after the emergency dispense.For NIHB patients needing a refill or replacement, you may encounter rejection codes (ME, MW, MY, NE). To process the prescription early, document the reason as "refill or replacement due to wildfires" and include the appropriate intervention code (see intervention codes below).	Drug Exception Centre: 1-800-580-0950 Express Scripts Canada: 1-888-511-4666
Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC)	For special authorization on urgent refills pharmacists may call. If approval is delayed by more than one hour, VA provides an interim supply.	Special Authorization Unit: 1-888-822-2884

Tips & recommendations



- Prioritize clear, compassionate communication.
- Stay informed of jurisdiction-specific policies and emergency procedures.
- Advise patients to keep all receipts for medications purchased out-of-province – these may be submitted to their home provincial plan for reimbursement.
- Offer minor ailment/common condition services where applicable.

Exemption codes

Common Pharmacy Claim Standard codes apply nationwide when overriding a DUR warning or needing to justify emergency supply:

NN – Emergency supply of medication

UF – patient gave adequate explanation, Rx filled as written

MK – Good faith emergency coverage established

EQ – valid reason to exceed days' supply limit



**Canadian
Red Cross**

Canadian Red Cross

The Canadian Red Cross is an organization that helps people and communities in Canada and around the world who are experiencing emergencies. They provide many services such as helping families reconnect, providing resources during disasters, and refugee services. Patients can register with the Red Cross to obtain access to lodging, food, emergency supplies, and other resources as needed.

[Helping To Strengthen Resiliency – Canadian Red Cross](#)



Canadian Association of Pharmacy for the Environment



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