March 26, 2020: Important update regarding the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic

Last Updated: September 30, 2021; November 23, 2021

Health Canada has issued a temporary Controlled Drugs and Substances Act (CDSA) subsection 56(1) class exemption for pharmacists from the provisions of:

- Subsection 31(1), and section 37 of the Narcotic Control Regulations (NCR)
- Sections G.03.002 and G.03.006 of Part G of the Food and Drug Regulations (FDR)
- Paragraphs 52 (c) and (d), subsection 54(1) of the Benzodiazepines and Other Targeted Substances Regulations.

This exemption expires on the earliest of September 30, 2026, the date it is replaced by another exemption, or the date it is revoked.

While this exemption is in effect:

- Pharmacists may dispense any narcotic pursuant to a written or verbal order from a practitioner
- Pharmacists may dispense a refill of a previous narcotic or controlled drug prescription pursuant to a written or verbal order from a practitioner
- Pharmacists may transfer prescriptions of narcotics and controlled drugs to another pharmacist in Canada and if they have already been transferred, may be transferred to another pharmacist
- Prescriptions for a benzodiazepine or other targeted substance that have already been transferred, may be transferred to another pharmacist in Canada
- Prescriptions for a benzodiazepine or other targeted substance may be refilled if more than one year has elapsed since the date it was issued by the prescriber

Refer to the Health Canada’s Subsection 56(1) Class Exemption for Patients, Practitioners and Pharmacists Prescribing and Providing Controlled Substances in Canada and related Frequently Asked Questions for further information.

OCP practice tools affected by the CDSA exemption have been updated. Please refer to the OCP website for COVID-19: Information for Pharmacy Professionals under the Patient Care section.
## PRESCRIPTION (Rx) REGULATION SUMMARY CHART

*The Health Canada s.56 exemptions are not reflected in the chart below. Please see the note on the cover page.

*Section 56 exemptions expire on September 30, 2026 as noted on the cover page.

### Classification

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| **Narcotic Drugs**<sup>1</sup> | Drugs listed in the Schedule to the Narcotic Control Regulations:  
- All products containing only 1 narcotic (‘straight’ narcotics)  
- All narcotics for parenteral use  
- Narcotic compounds with 1 narcotic and 1 non-narcotic active ingredient  
- All products containing any of the following 5 narcotics: diacetylmorphine (heroin), hydrocodone, methadone, oxycodone, pentazocine | Written<sup>1a,b</sup> | Refill ✔ ✘ | Purchase Record<sup>3e</sup> ✔ | ✘ ✔ ✔ |
| **Narcotic Preparations (Verbal Rx Narcotics)**<sup>2</sup> | All combinations for non-parenteral use, containing only 1 narcotic (other than: diacetylmorphine (heroin), hydrocodone, methadone, oxycodone, pentazocine) and 2 or more non-narcotic ingredients in recognized therapeutic doses | Verbal<sup>1a,c</sup> | Transfer ✘ | Rx Sales Record<sup>3f</sup> ✘ | ✔ ✘ |
| **Exempted Codeine Preparations**<sup>3</sup> | Preparations containing codeine (up to 8 mg/solid oral dosage form, or 20 mg/30mL of liquid) and 2 or more active non-narcotic ingredients | ✔ | ✔ | ✗ | ✔ |
| **Controlled Drugs Part I**<sup>4</sup> | Drugs listed in Part I of Schedule to Part G of the Food and Drug Regulations:  
- All products containing only 1 controlled drug (‘straight’ controlled drugs) and all combinations containing more than 1 controlled drug | ✔ | ✔, if Rx includes dates for, or intervals between refills | ✗ | ✔ |
| **Controlled Drugs Part II**<sup>5</sup> | Drugs listed in Part II of the Schedule to Part G of the Food and Drug Regulations | ✔ | ✔, if Rx includes dates for, or intervals between refills | ✗ | ✔ |
| **Controlled Drug Preparations Part II**<sup>6</sup> | All combinations containing 1 controlled drug in Part II and 1 or more non-controlled ingredient(s) in a recognized therapeutic dose | ✔ | ✔, if Rx includes dates for, or intervals between refills | ✗ | ✔ |
| **Controlled Drugs Part III**<sup>7</sup> | Drugs listed in Part III of the Schedule to Part G of the Food and Drug Regulations | ✔ | ✔, if Rx includes dates for, or intervals between refills | ✗ | ✔ |
| **Benzodiazepines & Other Targeted Substances**<sup>8</sup> | Drugs listed in the Schedule to the Benzodiazepines and Other Targeted Substances Regulations. | ✔ | ✔, refills valid if <1 year has elapsed since date Rx was issued, but Rx can only be transferred once | ✗ | ✔ |
| **Other Prescription Drugs**<sup>9</sup> | All drugs listed in the Prescription Drug List (PDL) of the Food and Drug Regulations or in Schedule I of NAPRA National Drug Schedules. | ✔ | ✔ | ✔ | ✗ | ✗ |

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*This is a summary. Refer to legislation for detailed information. Additional resources are available on [www.ocpinfo.com](http://www.ocpinfo.com).*

11/2021
### Dispensing Record Requirements:
- Name and address of patient
- Name, strength, quantity and form of drug
- Manufacturer of drug
- Directions for use
- Identification number of prescription
- Date of dispensing
- Signature (authorization) of dispensing pharmacist (RPh) and pharmacy technician (RPhT) (if applicable)
- Price charged
- Name and address of prescriber
- Prescriber’s registration number*
- Patient identification (ID) number and type*

*b Written prescriptions may be transmitted electronically (e.g., by fax, electronic ("e-") prescribing software, etc.)

*c Additional Verbal Prescription Record Requirements: The signature (authorization) of the pharmacy professional receiving the verbal prescription, where different from the pharmacy professional dispensing the prescription

* Per the NSAA, prescriber registration number and patient identification number/type requirements apply to monitored drugs as defined by the Ministry of Health, including all controlled substances and opioids

### Purchase Record Requirements
- Maintain in the Narcotic and Controlled Drug Register, as invoices filed in chronological order, or in other record for such purposes; must be readily available for auditing purposes for at least 2 years.

### Prescription Sales Record Requirements
- Maintain in the Narcotic and Controlled Drug Register or in a computer from which a printout must be readily available for auditing purposes for at least 2 years.

### Notes:
- Scanned original prescriptions and dispensing records must be retained for at least 10 years after the patient’s last recorded pharmacy service or at least 10 years after the day on which the patient reached/would have reached the 18 years of age, whichever is longer (DPRA; O. Reg. 264/16)
- Report an unexplained loss, theft or forged prescription (if dispensed) of a controlled substance within 10 days to the Office of Controlled Substances. See Health Canada’s website for additional information: [Loss or Theft](https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/controlled-substances-therapeutics.html)

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