

Minor Ailments

Frequently Asked Questions for Patients

Are pharmacists qualified to prescribe medications for minor ailments?

Pharmacists have the clinical training and expertise to safely treat minor ailments, and it is the expectation of the College that all pharmacists who are registered in Ontario maintain their competency to meet the standards of practice. This includes completing a mandatory orientation module to ensure pharmacists understand their ethical, legal, and professional obligations before prescribing for minor ailments.

Pharmacists are also expected to stay current with their clinical knowledge through continuing education opportunities, as needed.

How can a pharmacist prescribe medications for minor ailments without lab tests?

Minor ailments are health conditions that can be managed with minimal treatment and/or self-care strategies, and lab results are not usually required. These conditions are usually short-term, have a low risk of treatment masking underlying conditions, and only require minimal or short-term follow-up. Additionally, the pharmacist's assessment of the patient would help determine any medication or medical history red flags that could suggest a more serious condition. If, in their judgment, lab tests were required, the patient could be referred to a primary care provider.

Will my family doctor know if I am prescribed medications by a pharmacist?

Pharmacists who prescribe medications for minor ailments are required to notify a patient's primary care provider within a reasonable time to support continuity of care and positive treatment outcomes. If there is no primary care provider, this information is retained on the patient record in accordance with legislation and must continue to be accessible to the patient and their circle of care. Additionally, medications prescribed for minor ailments by a pharmacist will appear on a patient's electronic health record, available to physicians and other pharmacists across the province.

Is there any cost for minor ailments assessments?

To be assessed for a minor ailment by a pharmacist, patients only require their Ontario health card to access this pharmacy service funded by the Ministry of Health. If a prescription is issued to treat the minor ailment, similar to prescriptions provided by a physician or nurse practitioner, there may be costs or fees associated with dispensing.

How do I know what pharmacists are providing this service?

Patients are encouraged to speak to their pharmacist to find out what healthcare services they offer and whether they are right for their needs. Having the legislated authority to prescribe for minor ailments does not mean all pharmacists must offer or provide this service.

Can I get a prescription from a pharmacist virtually?

Pharmacists may provide minor ailments services virtually, and must follow the [Code of Ethics](#), [Standards of Practice](#) and relevant policies and guidelines including the College's [Virtual Care Policy](#). Importantly, the pharmacist must first determine that the manner in which virtual care is provided is suitable for the patient assessment and will enable them to meet all legal and professional obligations.

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Do I need an appointment, or can I just visit my pharmacy?

Individual pharmacies may have their own processes in place to provide minor ailments services. Patients are encouraged to speak to their pharmacist to find out what healthcare services they offer, the format of the services offered, and whether they are right for their needs.

Can pharmacists prescribe medications for minor ailments to patients of any age?

While the regulations authorizing pharmacists to prescribe for minor ailments do not include age restrictions, it is possible that age may be relevant to the treatment of specific minor ailments. Pharmacists will assess each patient seeking treatment for minor ailments, and if age or any other factor impacts their decision to prescribe medications, it should be explained to the patient along with a follow-up plan for monitoring and/or next steps. This could include a referral to another healthcare provider.