



# Emergency Preparedness Tools

## **Risk:** Misinformation and widespread fear

In public health situations that involve multiple jurisdictions in Canada, the federal, provincial and territorial governments work closely to ensure a coordinated and system-wide response is taken when needed to manage the situation.

In Saskatchewan, the Ministry of Health is working with the Saskatchewan Health Authority to develop the necessary planning to protect residents from transmission, support the healthcare system in the event of confirmed cases and provide the public with accurate information about the risk and provincial readiness.

## **Tools:**

This is an evolving situation. Up-to-date information and print-out material to support emergency preparedness planning in the pharmacy and to direct the public to accurate information about the coronavirus, can be found at:

- Saskatchewan Ministry of Health website [www.saskatchewan.ca/coronavirus](http://www.saskatchewan.ca/coronavirus)
  - Direction for Saskatchewan [Public Health Requirements for COVID-19 in Community Pharmacies](#)
  - [COVID-19 Workplace Information](#)
  - [Testing Information](#)
- Government of Canada website [www.canada.ca/coronavirus](http://www.canada.ca/coronavirus)
  - Interpretation services for COVID-19 information in other languages: 1-833-784-4397
- SCPP website [www.saskpharm.ca/site/coronavirus-information](http://www.saskpharm.ca/site/coronavirus-information) for a summary of the latest updates and links to resources.
  - [Practice Changes for Community Pharmacy During COVID-19 Pandemic](#)
- SCPP reference manual:
  - [Emergency Preparedness Resource Kit](#)
  - [Ethical Duty During a Pandemic](#) - pharmacy professionals need to be aware of their ethical duty during any health emergency, disaster or pandemic. Government public health agencies may call upon pharmacy professionals to assist in continuity of health services as required.
  - [Joint Statement of Professional Accountability](#)

## **Risk:** Drug shortages due to reduced supply or increased demand

Medications may be on back-order or demand may increase in response to public messaging to prepare for emerging health situation, by filling prescriptions. Stockpiling prescription medications in large quantities could trigger drug shortages, which ultimately puts other patient's health at risk.

### **Tools:**

- Pharmacies are encouraged to develop key messages to educate the public about the risks of stockpiling medications and options to consider:
  - It may be reasonable to have two weeks of chronic medications on hand in case of illness that requires self-isolation at home, but it is unnecessary to have 3 or more months on hand.
  - For pharmacies that offer a delivery service, remind patients that this is an option should they require it.
  - See also [Canadian Pharmacists Association warns against stockpiling medication in response to COVID-19](#).
- Collaborative practice agreements allow for a pharmacist to use level II prescribing authority to make a therapeutic substitution. See [section 4 of Part K of the SCPP Regulatory Bylaws](#) and ["Framework for Developing a Safe and Functional Collaborative Practice Agreement."](#)
- Proactively print lists of patients on a back-ordered medication. Contact those patients before they run out of medications to come up with a plan for the drug shortage.
  - Pharmacists can proactively contact physicians for alternatives for these identified patients, especially if a Level II Prescriptive Authority collaborative agreement does not exist.
- See medSask ["Drug Shortages"](#) for list of drugs that are unavailable.
- Monitor communication from the Ministry of Health (MoH), Drug Plan and Extended Benefits Branch for updates to benefit drugs and Exception Drug Status (EDS) criteria.
  - See recent [letter from MoH](#) regarding lifting of days supply limits.

## **Risk:** Patient not able to pick up their prescription

### **Tools:**

#### **Pharmacy Pick-Up**

- Outline process on how to proceed in situations where someone other than the patient comes in to pick up their medications.

#### **Delivery**

- Review prescription delivery policies to ensure that patient safety, confidentiality and medication integrity are maintained.
- For narcotic or controlled drugs there must be a chain of signatures by the individual taking responsibility from the time it leaves the pharmacy to receipt of delivery.
  - See updates from Health Canada - [CDSA Exemption and Interpretive Guide for Controlled Substances](#) and [Requirements for Chain of Signatures in Light of COVID-19](#).
- SCPP reference manual documents that provide more information on delivery service requirements include:
  - [Standards for Long Term Care Facilities](#) - Additional delivery standards specific to Long Term Care Facilities.
  - [Standards of Practice for Saskatchewan Pharmacists](#) - Delivery service standards including providing verbal or written instructions on proper use of the medication.
  - [Record Keeping Requirements](#) - Record retention requirements for delivery service contracts and prescription delivery logs.
  - [HIPA and PIPEDA - Preparing Your Community Pharmacy](#) - Ensure that proper confidentiality and privacy agreements are in place with service providers (e.g. delivery service provider).

## **Risk:** Prescriber is not available or accessible

### **Tools:**

- ["Prescription Validity - When Prescriber No Longer Practising"](#) for guidance on dispensing new prescriptions or refills when a prescriber passes away, retires or otherwise ceases practice.
- SCPP Registrar may waive some restrictions to pharmacist prescribing authority in extraordinary circumstances when it is in the public interest to do so. See ["Bylaw Interpretation for Exemptions to Prescribing Authority"](#).
  - Effective immediately, SCPP Registrar has enacted exemptions to prescribing authority. See [Practice Changes for Community Pharmacy During COVID-19 Pandemic](#).
- SCPP will collaborate with Health Canada if the exemption for Saskatchewan pharmacists to prescribe methadone, buprenorphine or other controlled substances needs to be re-enacted.
  - See Health Canada [CDSA Exemption and Interpretive Guide for Controlled Substances](#).

## **Risk:** Timely discharge from hospital to community

### **Tools:**

- Work with other health care professionals to properly fill out med reconciliation forms and fax prescriptions to community pharmacies as soon as they know that the patient is being discharged. This allows for safer and more timely delivery of discharge medications.
- To reduce delays in patients receiving their medications, pharmacists may use their full scope of practice to:
  - View lab results on electronic Health Record Viewer (eHR Viewer) to assess eligibility for certain EDS criteria. Supports timely approval of the Ministry's EDS requests;
  - Prescribe a medication that has missing information; and
  - Prescribe a medication that has been missed upon discharge.

## Risk: Occupational Health and Safety

### Tools:

- Ensure pharmacies have routine practices for infection control and safety. These include [hand hygiene](#), personal protective equipment (e.g. gloves, masks) based on activities performed, [respiratory hygiene/cough etiquette](#), and environmental disinfection (including blood pressure machine and pin pads in the pharmacy).
  - See [Infection Control Guidelines](#)
- Ensure ready access to equipment and supplies needed by the type of emergency, to protect the public and all pharmacy personnel in accordance with provincial guidelines. See "[Emergency Preparedness Resource Kit](#)."
- See the Ministry of Health's website [Saskatchewan.ca/coronavirus](https://www.saskatchewan.ca/coronavirus) for accurate information about the novel coronavirus 2019 risk and provincial readiness.
  - [About COVID-19](#)
  - [Information for Health Care Providers](#)
  - [Information for Businesses and Workers](#)
  - [Workplace Information](#)
  - [COVID-19 Cleaning and Disinfection for Public Facilities](#)
- Monitor communications from federal and provincial authorities to ensure that you are following directives, as situations evolve in your pharmacy.
  - See direction for Saskatchewan [Public Health Requirements for COVID-19 in Community Pharmacies](#)

## Risk: Not enough staff to carry out daily pharmacy operations

### Tools:

- Review your business continuity plan to ensure that it is current and ready to support staff and work functions through a pandemic or local emergency. Pharmacy managers must stay abreast of changes in provincial or federal direction or legislation and adapt their contingency plans accordingly.
- Understand the delegation of duties so that all pharmacy staff are working to their full scope. See [Licensed Pharmacy Technicians Scope of Practice](#).
- Monitor SCPP website to ensure that you are aware of any changes to licensure which may assist with the emergency situation at hand. See updates from SCPP:
  - [Virtual Care Update \(April 22, 2020\)](#)
  - [Emergency Registration and Licensure - Supplemental Policy](#)

## **Risk:** Pharmacy closure or reduced hours due to ill staff

### **Tools:**

- **The closure of a pharmacy should be the absolute last resort.** Aside from prescription medications, pharmacies provide essential services, education and access to over-the-counter medications not accessible elsewhere. Consider a [modification of operations or hours](#) to ensure continuity of care for your patients.
  - See [Modifying Pharmacy Hours of Operations Procedures](#).
- In single-pharmacy communities, alternate arrangements **must be made** with a local prescriber, hospital, health care centre or pharmacy in a nearby community. See "[Pharmacy Closures \(Temporary\) Policy](#)" for the process to follow for pharmacy owners who may need to close the pharmacy temporarily because of the absence of staff.
- In the event of a pharmacy closure, pharmacists may be able to prescribe when patients are unable to access their prescriptions, as per section 5 of Part K of the SPP Regulatory Bylaws. See prescriptive authority for emergency prescriptions in "[Emergency Preparedness Resource Kit](#)".
- Monitor communications from private insurance plans to confirm changes in processing and billing prescription (e.g. when pharmacies in Fort McMurray closed due to forest fires, some insurance plans provided special instructions when prescriptions were already billed at another pharmacy).
- See the Ministry of Health's website [Saskatchewan.ca/coronavirus](https://www.saskatchewan.ca/coronavirus) for accurate information about the novel coronavirus 2019 risk and provincial readiness.
  - Coronavirus Information for Saskatchewan Schools and Workplaces
  - Self-Isolation Information Sheet

## **Risk:** Managing a sudden influx of patients

...if a vaccine becomes available, or if additional injectors are required in support of broader public health efforts.

### **Tools:**

- Use existing processes, procedures, planning and protocol as those used for the seasonal flu vaccine.
- Pharmacists who have considered taking their Advanced Method Certification (AMC) training should plan to do so in anticipation of the availability of a vaccine.
- At the discretion of the Registrar, an exemption may be enacted to allow interns (2020 graduates) to complete [Advanced Method Certification \(AMC\) training](#). This authority will ensure an optimal number of pharmacy professionals are available to administer the flu vaccination, a potential COVID-19 vaccination, or other necessary medication by injection or other routes.