



May 19, 2020

Dear Saskatchewan Pharmacist,

The COVID-19 pandemic, in late February and early March 2020, resulted in significant shortages for certain drugs and uncertainty regarding the overall Canadian drug supply. Some of the contributing factors to these shortages were: stockpiling of medications by some pharmacies and patients, global drug manufacturing shut downs, and transportation interruptions.

On March 18, 2020, in response to drug supply concerns, Saskatchewan and many other provinces and territories, implemented prescription quantity limits to ensure the continued supply, and to prevent the stockpiling of prescription medications.

Pharmacists are a valued part of the front-line defense against COVID-19, balancing continuity of care for patients with responsible dispensing to ensure continued availability of medications for all. Today, the drug supply is in a more stable position, due in part to your actions in response to the prescription limits. We sincerely thank you for your efforts in this matter.

Effective May 20, 2020, the Ministry of Health is removing the quantity limits (subject to pharmacists' judgement regarding evolving shortages) and returning to the Drug Plan and Extended Benefits Branch (DPEBB) standard rule of three (3) prescription fills in a 45-day period. This change should not affect the vast majority of prescriptions. In 2019-2020, 87 per cent of prescriptions submitted to the province's Drug Plan were for a 34-day supply of medication or less.

Though the majority of the Canadian drug supply is more stable, there are drugs and drug classes where supply challenges continue to exist. For these medications, pharmacists should continue to dispense quantities based on supply availability and professional judgement. A list of critical drug shortages (Tier 3 shortages) can be found at the following Health Canada website: <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/compliance-enforcement/covid19-interim-order-drugs-medical-devices-special-foods/information-provisions-related-drugs-biocides/tier-3-shortages.html>

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Governments, manufacturers, distributors, pharmacies, and consumers all have a shared responsibility to ensure the supply of medications is available for those who need them. The drug supply is being actively monitored to inform timely responses as the COVID-19 pandemic evolves. Quantity limits may be reinstated if the drug supply is once again in jeopardy.

The DPEBB will be sending a Pharmacy Bulletin with additional information to all pharmacies in follow-up to this letter.

Please continue to refer to Saskatchewan.ca/COVID19 at <https://www.saskatchewan.ca/government/health-care-administration-and-provider-resources/treatment-procedures-and-guidelines/emerging-public-health-issues/2019-novel-coronavirus> for the most up-to-date information from the province and the Public Health Agency of Canada.

Once again, thank you for playing an integral role in ensuring that drug supplies remain stable. We are all in this together.

Sincerely,



Max Hendricks  
Deputy Minister of  
Health



Dawn Martin  
Chief Executive Officer,  
Pharmacy Association of  
Saskatchewan



Jeana Wendel  
Registrar, Saskatchewan  
College of Pharmacy  
Professionals

