



Low-Dose (Exempted) Codeine Products – Information for the Public

Saskatchewan College of Pharmacy Professionals (SCPP) is concerned about the growing number of overdoses and opioid-related deaths and are committed to taking action to address this crisis.

As one of the steps to address the opioid crisis in Saskatchewan, SCPP has made the following changes to low-dose (exempted) codeine product sales:

- Pharmacists must take a training course; and
- An assessment will be done for every person requesting low-dose (exempted) codeine product.

1. What are low-dose (exempted) codeine products?

Combination products that contain low-dose (exempted) codeine (an opioid) and can be bought in a pharmacy without a prescription. Common examples are Tylenol No.1^{®1} and Mersyndol[®].

2. What is the potential harm from taking low-dose (exempted) codeine products?

Common side effects include drowsiness, upset stomach, vomiting and constipation.

These products can cause harms such as medication overuse headache, liver damage and opioid use disorder. Harms often occur in individuals with no history of substance use disorders.

3. I have taken low-dose (exempted) codeine products for years without any problems. Why does the pharmacist need to assess me before buying?

The goal of the assessment is to provide safer care. Depending on the symptoms you are having, your medical conditions and other medications you are taking, the pharmacist will suggest the safest, most effective treatment for you.

4. Why do some pharmacists sell low-dose (exempted) codeine products and others do not?

Selling low-dose (exempted) codeine Products is an optional service. Pharmacists who choose **not** to sell low-dose (exempted) codeine products due to the potential harms, must still provide you with information and refer you to an appropriate member of the health care team.

5. Why is there a restriction on the pack size of low-dose (exempted) codeine products?

One contributing factor to the current opioid crisis has been the growth in the use of opioids for medical treatment. The restriction on pack size aligns with the Government of Canada's prevention strategy to address the opioid crisis.

6. What information does the pharmacist need from me when I ask to buy a low-dose (exempted) codeine product?

Your current symptoms, allergies, medical conditions, and any prescription and non-prescription medications that you take. The pharmacy team member may ask to see some identification if they do not know you to ensure they are providing the right medication to the right person.

7. Why is it recorded on my prescription drug profile when I buy a low-dose (exempted) codeine product?

This is how Saskatchewan monitors low-dose (exempted) codeine product use to identify if there is inappropriate use of the drug in the province.

¹ Disclaimer: Tylenol No.1[®] brand name product is no longer made. It is included as an example because that is the name commonly known by the public. Ask your pharmacist for more details.