



## Other Diseases – Paxlovid

On May 19, 2022, the Ministry of Health (MoH) and the Saskatchewan College of Pharmacy Professionals (SCPP) launched the Paxlovid Distribution, Prescribing and Assessment program (see [here](#)). The program is intended to provide eligible residents with access to this antiviral treatment for COVID-19 throughout the province. This program is supported by expanded prescribing authority for pharmacists.

[The Pharmacy and Pharmacy Disciplines Act](#) (s.23) and section 19 of Part K of the [SCPP Regulatory Bylaws](#) enables pharmacists to prescribe under the “Other Diseases Identified by the Minister of Health or Designate” category in certain situations, so long as it is done within the terms and conditions established by the MoH and the SCPP for the specific disease identified.

The CMHO for Saskatchewan has identified a need for Paxlovid (nirmatrelvir/ritonavir) for the treatment of SARS-CoV-2.

**Following are the terms and conditions for this provincial program** (see [here](#) and [here](#)):

- **Time-bound:** This program has been extended until further notice at the discretion of the Ministry of Health (MoH) and/or the Chief Medical Health Officer (CMHO).
- **Patient Eligibility:** Non-hospitalized patients with mild COVID-19 who meet the eligibility criteria in the medSask Guidelines (for eligible patients see [here](#)).
- **Pharmacy Prerequisites:**
  - See [announcement](#) and [map](#) of pharmacies prescribing or dispensing Paxlovid;
  - SCPP pharmacy expectations, as described below.
- **Pharmacists Requirements:**
  - Must prescribe Paxlovid and manage drug interactions according to [medSask’s Guidelines](#);
  - Compulsory [Paxlovid training](#) for medSask Guidelines, if not previously taken;

SCPP Practice expectations, as described below.

- **Other Program Requirements:**
  - See [COVID-19 Treatments](#) for medSask clinical tools, or [contact medSask](#);
  - Monitor Drug Plan and Extended Benefits Branch communications and [COVID-19 Programs website](#) for updates, including reimbursement for prescribing;
  - Monitor the SCPP [COVID-19 web page](#), the [Community Pharmacy Practice Enactments](#), and email communications for updates.



## Q&A's

### 1. What is required of pharmacists who choose to prescribe Paxlovid?

- All Paxlovid prescribing must be in accordance with the terms and conditions specified by the MoH and the SCPP, including using the medSask guidelines (see [here](#)) and taking the Paxlovid training for the medSask Guidelines, if not previously completed.
- Also see [General Provisions for Prescribing Authority](#) that applies to all pharmacist prescribing, as well as Level II prescribing authorized under s. 19 “Other Diseases Identified by the Minister of Health or Designate.”

### 2. How do I reduce the risk of transmitting COVID-19 in the pharmacy?

- When distributing Paxlovid to an eligible patient, the MoH requires pharmacists to arrange contactless medication counselling and dispensing with the patient or caregiver (see [here](#)).
- Other ways to reduce the risk of transmitting COVID-19 in the pharmacy may include:
  - Assessing patients virtually, where possible through telephone or other virtual platforms if available. Noting that it must meet privacy requirements and allow pharmacists to adhere to their standards of practice (see [General Provisions for Prescribing Authority](#)). Pharmacists must also use professional judgement to find ways to assess the patient during virtual assessments (e.g., heart rate, breathing).
  - Providing contactless pick up (e.g., curbside, authorized family/friend pickup) or delivery. See the SCPP’s [Patient ID](#) document for more information on agents picking up on the patient’s behalf and delivering medications.
- As part of regular pharmacy operations, pharmacy owners and managers must also maintain robust infection prevention control measures to reduce the transmission of COVID-19 to the pharmacy team, other staff members, and the public. (See the SCPP’s [Infection Control Standards and Guidelines](#), the [Respiratory Hygiene and Cough Etiquette Standards and Guidelines](#), and the [Hand Hygiene Guidelines](#).)

Also see SCPP’s [COVID-19 Information](#) for other resources that may assist you.



### 3. Who is eligible to receive a prescription for Paxlovid?

- Patient eligibility is determined by the MoH and are integrated in the medSask guidelines in collaboration with the SHA. (See [here.](#))
- The Guidelines contain both **inclusion criteria** and **exclusion criteria**. Patients may be ineligible to receive Paxlovid in the community pharmacy but may still be eligible after further assessment and treatment by other practitioners. (See [medSask Guidelines here.](#))
- Remind patients who are not eligible that COVID-19 vaccines are very effective in reducing complications and hospitalizations from COVID-19.

### 4. How will the pharmacist confirm that the patient has tested positive for COVID-19?

- The MoH determines patient-eligibility for this program, including verification of patients testing positive for COVID-19. These are integrated into the medSask Guidelines ([see here.](#))
- Acceptable verification includes:
  - The patient will inform the pharmacist of a positive COVID-19 test result from a self-administered rapid antigen test (RAT), the pharmacist is not required to see the RAT result.
  - Polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test results may be accessed through [eHR Viewer](#), if available.
- Also see:  
[Status Update – COVID-19 Rapid Antigen Tests in Pharmacies](#) if distributing tests to priority individuals as part of this Paxlovid program. Also see [Sale and Distribution of Medical Testing Devices](#) for more information (noting s. 2.6 that aligns with Health Canada request that distribution records are maintained and processes developed to respond to complaints and conduct recalls); and

[Accessing PIP and eHR Viewer](#) when looking up test results.



## 5. What follow-up is required as part of this provincial Paxlovid program?

- Under this Level II prescribing category, pharmacists must follow up according to medSask Guidelines ([see here](#)). Patients must be assessed for:
  - Improving or worsening of symptoms;
  - Whether they require an emergency referral;
  - Adverse events, which are to be reported to [Pfizer Canada](#) or [Health Canada](#); and
  - Patient understanding of the strategy to manage their drug interactions (if any).
- As with all prescribing, pharmacists must also follow-up according to the terms, conditions and standards of practice (see s. 6 of [General Provisions for Prescribing Authority](#)). With respect to Paxlovid, this includes documenting all follow-up in the PAR ([see here](#)) and notifying the patient's primary care provider by sending the entire document. With respect to Paxlovid, this includes documenting all follow-up in the PAR ([see here](#)) and notifying the patient's primary care provider by sending the entire document.

## 6. How can pharmacy technicians, pharmacy interns and pharmacy assistants assist with follow-up?

- The follow up required for Paxlovid (noted in question 5) involves assessing the patient's response to therapy. This is a clinical role and must only be performed by the pharmacist. However, other pharmacy team members may contact the patient depending on the purpose or conversation.
  - **Pharmacist interns (students/extended)** may follow-up to monitor responses and outcomes to Paxlovid and document in the PAR, providing they do so under direct supervision of the pharmacist. ([See Supervision of Pharmacy Interns here.](#))
  - **Pharmacy technicians and pharmacy technician interns (students/extended)** must not initiate any follow up. They may document information in the PAR if they receive a call from patients regarding their response to Paxlovid, but all therapeutic/ clinical discussions must be referred to the pharmacist. ([See Supervision of Pharmacy Interns here.](#))
  - **Pharmacy assistants** are not permitted to follow up as they have no clinical role.
- Pharmacy technicians, pharmacy technician interns and pharmacy assistants may contact patients for purposes that are not clinical in nature. For example, they may notify a patient that their medication is ready or confirm the patient's address for delivery.



## 7. What documentation, communication and notifications are required when prescribing?

- As required for all pharmacist prescribing, the SPCP requires that:
  - Pharmacists document their assessment in the PAR to ensure accurate information is available to share with other health care providers involved in the patient's care. (See ss. 3 & 11 of [General Provisions for Prescribing Authority](#)); and
  - The PAR must be retained as part of the patient's pharmacy profile as per [Record Retention and Destruction policy](#).
- As with all Level II prescribing, under Other Diseases (s. 19 of Part K), all pharmacists must follow the requirements outlined by the SPCP and MOH. Unique to the Paxlovid Distribution, Prescribing and Assessment program, the MoH requires that the PAR:
  - Must be completed entirely to be considered a valid prescription.
  - Note: When dispensing Paxlovid, pharmacists must also ensure that PARs received from physicians, nurse practitioners and other pharmacists have been completed entirely to be considered a valid prescription.
  - Must be completed as thoroughly as possible, before referring to another practitioner. (Send entire document to practitioner).
  - Must be provided to the patient's primary care provider to maintain the collaborative practice environment.
  - Must be communicated back to the original prescriber if modified.
  - Must be up-to-date and prescriber must check for updates, if using pre-printed copies.
  - Must be retained even if the patient is ineligible. (See [Record Retention and Destruction](#).)

**Note: In this publicly funded program, the PAR is being used as a patient record, a prescription, and to communicate critical information to other health care professionals.**

Also see s. 17 of [General Provisions for Prescribing Authority for more information on Level II prescribing](#).