

Canadian guidelines acknowledge pharmacists as an accessible and critical point of care for distributing naloxone – an intervention that can help address this public health crisis

Between January 2016 and December 2021, approximately 14 Canadians outside of Quebec were hospitalized daily due to opioid-related poisoning, with this number increasing to 15 hospitalizations/day in the first 3 months of 2022.¹

KEY RECOMMENDATION:

All patients receiving an opioid should proactively be dispensed a take-home naloxone (THN) kit and counselled by a pharmacist.

– 2020 Canadian national consensus guidelines for naloxone prescribing by pharmacists²

As front-line healthcare professionals, pharmacists are uniquely positioned to help patients receiving opioid therapy. Follow these 6 steps to help your pharmacy team proactively distribute THN kits and educate everyone picking up an opioid prescription.



STATE YOUR GOAL:

Everyone prescribed an opioid should receive a naloxone kit.

Anticipate and manage any issues, including competing priorities (flu, holiday season) that might get in the way of achieving your goal.

Ask yourself and your team, “Is there a gap?” What is the current ratio of dispensed opioids vs. naloxone provided at your pharmacy?



EDUCATE AND ALIGN TEAM:

Align ALL staff in your pharmacy to proactively co-dispense naloxone with every opioid Rx.

Assign a staff naloxone champion to ensure staff training is complete and in-store materials are available and visible and to oversee the workflow.

Display in-store materials prominently for patients to see; for example, a sign stating “We offer naloxone along with every opioid Rx” may help to facilitate a discussion.

Make sure staff are comfortable counselling patients about naloxone without stigma by giving them opportunities to practice.



ADJUST WORKFLOW:

Create standard practices in your pharmacy to make co-dispensing of naloxone a consistent process.

Identify opioid Rxs at intake/processing and have the naloxone kit prepared alongside it.

Assign a staff member to order and maintain sufficient NARCAN[®] Nasal Spray inventory and THN kits, be responsible to add NARCAN[®] Nasal Spray units to the THN kits, and manage in-store material inventory and display signage in the pharmacy.

Taking into account the increased demand for delivered Rxs, ensure that all delivered opioid Rxs include a naloxone kit.

Set up alerts on opioid drug files to remind your staff about co-dispensing naloxone proactively.



KNOW YOUR PATIENT:

Engage with your patients to ensure success for your co-dispensing strategies.

Be aware of any stigma – your own and the patient’s. Choose your words carefully. Key points include:

- Anyone taking an opioid may be at risk of dangerous response – all patients prescribed opioids should have naloxone in the home; family members should be educated on naloxone use, whether it’s injectable naloxone or NARCAN[®] Nasal Spray.
- NARCAN[®] Nasal Spray helps temporarily reverse the effects of opioid-induced respiratory depression (OIRD) – the “slowed breathing” that occurs when taking more opioids than the body can handle.



BE A PHARMACY LEADER:

Help make a difference in your community through outreach.

Once co-dispensing is fully implemented in your pharmacy, consider hosting opioid awareness days in your pharmacy or in your community.

Share your success stories and best practices to influence change with peers and colleagues.

Reach out to community support groups, offering counselling and ready access to naloxone take-home kits.



MITIGATE BARRIERS:

Set yourself up for success.

Understand the billing process for naloxone kits.

Be prepared to handle patient objections.

Ensure sufficient stock of NARCAN[®] Nasal Spray and the other THN kit contents.

Display visual materials near the pharmacy counter to generate interest: posters, counter cards, demonstration devices, or patient brochures.

NARCAN[®] Nasal Spray is a pure opioid antagonist indicated for emergency use to reverse known or suspected opioid overdose, as manifested by respiratory and/or severe central nervous system depression.³ NARCAN[®] Nasal Spray can be administered by a bystander (non-healthcare professional) before emergency medical assistance becomes available, but it is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical care. Emergency medical assistance (calling 911) should be requested immediately when an opioid overdose is suspected, before administering NARCAN[®] Nasal Spray.³

Please consult the Product Monograph for contraindications, warnings, precautions, adverse reactions, drug interactions, dosing guidelines, and conditions of clinical use at narcannasalspray.ca/PM/NNS_EN.pdf. The Product Monograph is also available by calling 1-844-898-0657. Always direct patients to read the label and follow the directions for use.

ONTARIO BILLING CODES⁴

PIN	Description	Dosage Form	Total Amount Reimbursed
93877255	ONE THN KIT CONTAINING NARCAN® NASAL SPRAY <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$110: THN kit • \$10: professional fee 	Intra-Nasal	\$120.00
93877256	TWO THN KITS CONTAINING NARCAN® NASAL SPRAY (one professional fee only) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$220: two THN kits • \$10: professional fee 	Intra-Nasal	\$230.00
93877251	INITIAL THN KIT CONTAINING INJECTABLE NALOXONE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$35: THN kit • \$10: professional fee • \$25: training fee 	Injectable	\$70.00
93877252	REPLACEMENT THN KIT CONTAINING INJECTABLE NALOXONE (or initial kit with no training) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$35: THN kit • \$10: professional fee 	Injectable	\$45.00
93877257	TWO THN KITS CONTAINING INJECTABLE NALOXONE (one initial and one replacement kit with one professional fee only) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$70: two THN kits • \$10: professional fee • \$25: training fee 	Injectable	\$105.00
93877258	TWO THN KITS CONTAINING INJECTABLE NALOXONE (two replacement kits with one professional fee only) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$70: two THN kits • \$10: professional fee 	Injectable	\$80.00

Billing codes and reimbursement rates reflect those published as of April 27, 2018. Please see references for source and confirm rates directly, as these are subject to change.

Eligible recipients WITHOUT an Ontario health card number²

Use a reasonable effort to obtain a health card number.

If the eligible recipient does not have an Ontario health card number or does not wish to provide identification, the following information can be submitted in order to provide them with the requested naloxone kit.

- **First name:** HARM
- **Last name:** REDUCTION
- **Person's gender:** F = female; M = male; or blank
- **Person's date of birth:** Valid YYYYMMDD (if known) or 20000101
- **Proxy patient ID:** 89999 999 91
- **Intervention code:** PS (Professional Care Services)
- **Product identification number (PIN):** See above
- **Valid pharmacist ID**

Use your professional judgement and ensure proper documentation is maintained.

References:

1. Health Canada. Opioid and stimulant poisoning hospitalizations. Located at: https://health-infobase.canada.ca/src/doc/SRHD/Update_Deaths_2022-09.pdf. Accessed October 3, 2022
2. Tsuyuki RT, et al. Canadian national consensus guidelines for naloxone prescribing by pharmacists. *Can Pharm J* 2020;153(6):347-351. Located at: <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1715163520949973>
3. NARCAN® Nasal Spray Product Monograph. Emergent BioSolutions Canada Ltd., March 05, 2021.
4. UPDATED Notice from the Executive Officer: Funding of Naloxone Nasal Spray through the ONPP and Updates to the Existing Program. Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care Ontario Public Drug Programs. Located at: https://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/drugs/opdp_eo/notices/exec_office_20180321.pdf. Accessed October 3, 2022.