



PHARMACY SERVICES  
IN NOVA SCOTIA:  
**Prescribers' Guide**

# WE ARE HERE TO HELP.

This resource is part of the Pharmacy of Nova Scotia's **Help Us Help You** campaign to improve the patient experience at NS pharmacies and increase the overall understanding of pharmacy scope of practice.

This guide provides you with details on what pharmacists can provide to patients. From prescription renewals to preventative treatments, pharmacists are a valuable health resource for all Nova Scotians.

**With better understanding of how we provide care, we can work together more effectively - a win for patients, physicians, nurse practitioners and pharmacists.**

When a pharmacist prescribes, provides a test, or gives medication by injection, they are **required by standards of practice** to notify the patient's physician or nurse practitioner by fax.

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Not all services are available in all pharmacies nor by all pharmacists. To find a list of all pharmacies in the province, visit

**[PANS.NS.CA/FIND](https://pans.ns.ca/find)**

Filter by "special services" for more information on services available by area.

## DISPENSING SERVICES

- **Please include the indication on prescriptions.** Pharmacies require the indication under pharmacy regulations to ensure that the assessment and counselling is based on the appropriate indication. Adding the indication at the time of prescribing will reduce phone calls/ faxes from pharmacies.
- If the patient is using blister packs, please prescribe a quantity to match the blister pack
  - ie: M: 28 S: Take one table daily. Fill every 28 days.
- If there is a change in the dose, please add "dose change" or "new dose" notation to keep pharmacy team informed; this will limit office calls.
- Please add Pharmacare exception status criteria codes when required for Pharmacare patients
  - For a full list visit: <https://novascotia.ca/dhw/pharmacare/documents/Criteria-for-Exception-Status-Coverage.pdf>

- Prescriptions take up to 48 hours to complete. When providing a prescription to a patient (or faxing to the pharmacy), please ensure the patient is aware of this timeline. **If patient is out of medication or it is an acute care need, the patient should call the pharmacy to let them know.**
  - Include doctor license # and fax # to prevent delay
- If a prescription is sent by e-prescribing in the DIS, the pharmacy does NOT receive notification. The patient will need to contact their pharmacy to request it be filled. The pharmacy can confirm when it can be ready.
- For narcotic and controlled medications, please include the quantity/part-fill and total amount authorized. Third party drug plans will not pay for the prescription unless the prescriber writes out the quantity.
  - ie: "30 days with 5 refills" does not meet their requirements.
    - the prescription would need to state "30 tablets and 5 refills. Dispense every 30 days."

## PUBLICLY FUNDED SERVICES:

- Prescription renewals
- Lyme disease preventative treatment
- UTI assessment & prescribing
- Herpes Zoster assessment & prescribing
- Anticoagulation management service
  - INR testing & assessment
- Hormonal contraception management
- Naloxone home kit training
  - kits are also free of charge
- Medication reviews\*

\*for Pharmacare beneficiaries only

## PUBLICLY FUNDED VACCINES:

- Covid-19
- Influenza

- Patients should be encouraged to book an appointment with their pharmacy to avoid delays.
  - Virtual appointments available at some pharmacies
- Learn more about pharmacy services here:

**[PANS.NS.CA/PUBLIC/PHARMACY-SERVICES](https://pans.ns.ca/public/pharmacy-services)**

## SERVICES PROVIDED THAT REQUIRE ADDITIONAL FEES:

cost covered in some instances by private health plans  
+ cost covered in some instances for Pharmacare patients

- Prescription Adaptation +
- Therapeutic Substitution +
- Medication Reviews +
- Minor Ailment Assessment & Prescribing
- Travel Health Vaccination & Prescribing
- Managing Chronic Disease Services
- Various Point of Care Testing Services
- Smoking Cessation Programs
- Injection Services
  - vaccines
    - Herpes Zoster
    - Human Papilloma Virus (HPV)
  - other
    - Hepatitis A and B
    - Typhoid Fever
    - Varicella (Chicken Pox)
    - Meningococcal Disease
    - Pneumococcal Disease
    - Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR)
    - Tetanus, Diphtheria and Pertussis (Tdap)

# PRESCRIPTION RENEWALS

covered by MSI with NS Health Card

- Pharmacists can assess and prescribe for renewal of most medications, including controlled substances
- Requires an assessment by a pharmacist
  - Pharmacies are not allowed to "lend a couple of pills" until scheduled appointments. A pharmacist renewal assessment is required. **It's a separate stand alone prescription.**
    - The pharmacist takes full responsibility for the prescribing decision
- Renewal prescriptions can be written for a duration that the pharmacist determines to be appropriate based on assessment and available information (ex: current symptoms, lab results). Pharmacists have access to SHARE and will review as part of the assessment for the renewal.
- Renewals for controlled substances are limited to 30 days. Pharmacists can re-assess after 30 days and renew prescription if appropriate.



- Renewal service may only be billed by pharmacies if the pharmacist renews prescriptions for a duration not less than the patient's usual duration of therapy following billing guidelines.
  - The Department of Health and Wellness Guide states, "the pharmacist renews prescriptions for the duration not less than the patient's usual duration of therapy, unless it is the professional judgement of the pharmacist that it would be unsafe or unwise to do so as documented in the patient record. Usual duration will include usual day supply dispensed plus authorized refills."
- This service is publicly funded, however it is capped at 4 services per year per patient.

# LYME DISEASE PREVENTATIVE TREATMENT

covered by MSI with NS Health Card

Pharmacists can prescribe preventative treatments for Lyme disease only in accordance with the NS Infectious Disease Protocol:

- Tick bite must have occurred within the past 72 hours and tick was attached for at least 36 hours. Timing is essential in treatment.
- Pharmacist must be confident that tick has been identified as a black-legged tick. To help with identification, it is recommended that the patient keep the tick and bring it in a zip-lock bag. It is also recommended to take a picture of it at the time of removal.
  - This service does not include tick removal.

## Pharmacists cannot prescribe:

- **treatment for Lyme disease.** If patient has symptoms of Lyme (ie: bullseye rash), patient will be referred to another healthcare provider.
- antibiotics to have on hand in case of a bite.
- where it is advised by another healthcare provider for the patient to follow the "watch and wait" approach

# UTI - ASSESSMENT & PRESCRIBING

covered by MSI with NS Health Card

- Pharmacists cannot perform urinalysis
- If patient has had a UTI in the last 6 months, or three in the last 12, the pharmacist will refer to another healthcare provider for urinalysis and assessment
- If patient has symptoms of a complicated UTI, they will be referred to another healthcare provider (ex: male reproductive system, fever, flank pain, etc.)
- **Uncomplicated UTI** only for patients ages  $\geq 16$ 
  - patient has a **female** reproductive system
  - infrequent (none in past six months, less than three in one calendar year)
- Requires an assessment by a pharmacist
- This service is covered twice in one calendar year.
- Patient must have had a previous UTI diagnosed by an MD or NP

# HORMONAL CONTRACEPTION MANAGEMENT

covered by MSI with NS Health Card

- Requires an assessment by a pharmacist
  - assessment includes counselling on many topics such as STI prevention, pap smears, and mammograms
  - service provided once per calendar year
    - pharmacists will provide follow-up assessment in 3 months for new prescriptions
- The indication must be for contraception (not for other reasons such as acne or dysmenorrhea) **for the female reproductive system.**
- Pharmacists can prescribe all hormonal contraception methods. When intra-uterine contraception is the method of choice, pharmacists can prescribe if they have an arrangement with a healthcare provider for insertion.
- Pharmacists can prescribe and administer injectable hormonal contraception (fees apply for injection service).

# HERPES ZOSTER- ASSESSMENT & PRESCRIBING

covered by MSI with NS Health Card

- Requires an assessment by a pharmacist for anti-viral.
- Pharmacists cannot prescribe for any pain treatment other than OTC Tylenol/Advil.
  - Nerve pain not controlled by OTC options may receive a referral.
- Pharmacists will refer to another healthcare provider if there are complicating factors such as ophthalmological, otic, or neurological manifestations.
- Pharmacists can treat if shingles rash has been present for 72 hours or less (7 days or less if immunocompromised).
- Patients that present with post-herpetic neuralgia will be referred to an MD/NP for assessment.

# ANTICOAGULATION MANAGEMENT SERVICE

covered by MSI with NS Health Card

- Visit [pans.ns.ca/cpams](https://pans.ns.ca/cpams) for a list of 80+ participating pharmacies
- In-pharmacy INR testing by finger prick blood test
- Pharmacist takes responsibility for anticoagulation management including dose adjustments and follow up.
- Pharmacist will refer patients to emergency in event of signs of major bleeding.
- Pharmacist will contact physician if minor/moderate bleed requires physical assessment and/or if guidelines recommend vitamin K.
- Fax notifications will be marked "for patient file" OR "requires physician/ NP" if further action is required.



Patients have reported the service improved convenience, shorter wait time, less expense/time off work required to regularly visit a lab and improved confidence in managing their condition.

# MENTAL HEALTH & ADDICTIONS

covered by MSI with NS Health Card

## **Bloom Program** ([bloomprogram.ca](http://bloomprogram.ca))

- A community pharmacy initiative (first of its kind in Canada and internationally) designed to increase and improve mental health and addictions care for Nova Scotians
- Available at **47** pharmacies across the province
- Available for patients with one or more mental health or addiction diagnosis or a medication problem
  - No waitlist.
  - One-on-one care and patient advocacy from pharmacist.
  - Access to and information about community mental health and addiction resources.
  - Assistance in navigating the mental health and addictions system in Nova Scotia.
  - Help managing medication-related issues.
- Funded by NS Dept of Health & Wellness, administered by NSHA, part of NS mental health & addictions strategy.

# INJECTIONS

Pharmacists can assess, prescribe and administer the following:

**Vaccines with additional fees:  
(cost for vaccine + administration)**

- Herpes Zoster (Shingles)
- Human Papilloma Virus (HPV)
- Hepatitis A and B
- Typhoid Fever
- Varicella (Chicken Pox)
- Meningococcal Disease
- Pneumococcal Disease
- Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR)
- Tetanus, Diphtheria and Pertussis (Tdap)
- Other travel vaccines

**Injections with additional fees:  
(cost for injection + administration)**

- Vitamin B12
- injectable hormonal contraception
- other S/C or I/M medications



**Vaccines covered by MSI with NS Health Card:**

- Covid-19
- Influenza

- All certified pharmacists and technicians can administer injections for patients  $\geq 2$  years.
- Those with additional training can administer Covid-19 and Influenza vaccines to patients  $\geq 6$  months.

- Covid-19 and Influenza vaccinations are recorded in CanImmunize which feeds directly into Panorama.
- Pharmacies can only access Covid-19 and Influenza vaccinations from Public Health. Other public health vaccines are not currently available to pharmacy.

# MINOR AILMENTS

patient assessment fee required

Pharmacists can assess and prescribe for a number of minor ailments including:

## **GASTROINTESTINAL**

- Diarrhea (non-infectious)
- Dyspepsia
- GERD
- Hemorrhoids
- Nausea

## **HEAD/ NOSE/ THROAT**

- Allergic Rhinitis
- Cough
- Headache (mild)
- Nasal Congestion
- Oral Thrush
- Oral Ulcers
- Sore Throat

## **REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH**

- Dysmenorrhea (menstrual cramps, not hormonal contraception)
- Emergency Contraception
- Vaginal Candidiasis

### **DERMATOLOGICAL**

- Acne (mild)
- Calluses and Corns
- Contact Allergic Dermatitis
- Dandruff
- Eczema (mild to moderate)
- Fungal Infections of the Skin
- Impetigo
- Urticaria (mild)
- Warts (excluding facial and genital)

### **OTHER**

- Herpes Simplex (infrequent)
- Joint Pain (minor)
- Muscle Pain (minor)
- Sleep Disorders (minor)
- Smoking Cessation
- Threadworms and Pinworms
- Xerophthalmia

# MEDICATION REVIEWS

**Pharmacists do a comprehensive review of all medications** (prescription and nonprescription), educate patients, and check for appropriateness, safety and effectiveness. There are two available medication review services:

## **Basic Medication Review**

- Patient must be prescribed 3 or more medications
- Funded for all Pharmacare patients; co-pay may apply

## **Advanced Medication Review**

- Patient must be taking 4 or more prescription medications OR taking one of the following:  
**Methyldopa | Indomethacin | Cyclobenzaprine | Diazepam**  
**Chlordiazepoxide | Clorazepate | Amitriptyline**
- Have at least one of the following diseases:  
**Asthma | Diabetes | Hypertension | Hyperlipidemia**  
**Congestive heart failure | COPD | Arthritis**
- Service is covered for all senior (65+) Pharmacare patients; co-pay may apply

# ADAPTATIONS & SUBSTITUTIONS

provided by appointment for additional fees  
cost covered in some instances for Pharmacare patients

- **Prescription Adaptation**
  - Pharmacists may prescribe to adapt a prescription to maintain/enhance drug effectiveness and/or improve adherence if:
    - drug strength and/or formulation is not commercially available
    - information is missing from prescription but can be obtained from patient, patient record, etc.
    - patient-specific factor (age, weight, medical conditions) requires dose adjustment
    - adjustment will enhance ability of patient to take medication more effectively
- **Therapeutic Substitution**
  - Pharmacists may substitute a medication if:
    - it will maintain/enhance effectiveness
    - support patient's best interests (financial, formulary, payer considerations)

# CHRONIC DISEASE MANAGEMENT

provided by appointment for additional fees  
cost covered in some instances by private health plans

- Pharmacists provide drug therapy assessments and follow-ups for patients living with chronic disease.
- This service also includes
  - advice on life-style changes
  - device training
  - patient education

## **Smoking Cessation Programs**

- Pharmacists are authorized to prescribe all medications and nicotine replacement treatments available
- Many pharmacies offer programs that can provide patients with support to quit smoking.

## **Common chronic diseases treated in a pharmacy:**

- Asthma/COPD
- Cardiovascular disease
- Diabetes
- Obesity

WE ARE HERE TO HELP.



Learn more:

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