

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 and December 2022,
approximately 18 Canadians were hospitalized
each day due to opioid-related poisoning –
approximately 3 per day in Quebec alone.^{1,2}**

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 pharmacists³

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 prescription.

Assign a staff naloxone champion to ensure staff training is complete, 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 prescription” 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 prescriptions 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 naloxone 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 prescriptions, ensure that all delivered opioid prescriptions receive a naloxone kit recommendation as well.

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 opioids may be at risk of a 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.
- Naloxone 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 offering to co-dispense 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 THN kits.



MITIGATE BARRIERS:

Set yourself up for success.

Understand the billing process for naloxone kits.

Be prepared to discuss with patients.

Ensure sufficient stock of NARCAN[®] Nasal Spray and 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.⁴ 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.⁴

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.

QUEBEC BILLING CODES⁵⁻⁷

Program Code	Description	Billing Code	Total Amount Reimbursed
8K: For people on opioids	NARCAN® NASAL SPRAY 2 devices	02458187	\$97.98 (\$92.00 + \$5.98 wholesaler upcharge)
	INJECTABLE NALOXONE 2 injectables	02455935 (Omega) 02453258 (Sandoz)	\$14.64 per vial of 1.0 mL (\$13.75 + \$0.89 wholesaler upcharge)
8L: For third-party individuals or caregivers	NARCAN® NASAL SPRAY 2 devices	99101434	\$97.98 (\$92.00 + \$5.98 wholesaler upcharge)
	INJECTABLE NALOXONE 2 injectables	02455935 (Omega) 02453258 (Sandoz)	\$14.64 per vial of 1.0 mL (\$13.75 + \$0.89 wholesaler upcharge)
8K: For people on opioids & 8L: For third-party individuals or caregivers	Pre-assembled THN kit to which 2 NARCAN® Nasal Spray devices must be added (maximum 4 kits/service)	99101461	\$17.00
	Pre-assembled THN kit to which 2 injectables have already been added (maximum 4 kits/service)	99101443 (person using opioids) 99101444 (third party or caregiver)	\$31.00
	Barrier mask (single use)	99101446	\$5.00
	Training & education about naloxone (allowed once/person/pharmacy/365 days)	00901013 EN	\$19.34
	Billing for dispensing new script	O	\$8.74 (for more than 48,500 prescriptions) \$9.34 (for 48,500 prescriptions and less)
	Dispensing fee for the pre-assembled THN kit	Y	(Dispensing fee is at \$0.00)

Billing codes and reimbursement rates reflect those published as of September 27, 2023. Please see references for source and confirm rates directly, as these are subject to change.

Eligible recipients WITHOUT a Quebec Health Insurance Card, claim slip (*carnet de réclamation*) or proof of temporary eligibility^{8,9}

In the absence of these documents, you can still provide the medication and supplies if the recipient:

- Requires urgent care
- Is a minor aged 14 years or older
- Is homeless
- Is a citizen of another Canadian province or territory, a foreign national, or a tourist who presents their ID (such as a passport)

To do so, you can enter the following information:

- Last name
- Date of birth
- First name
- Sex
- New intervention or exception code MK* for a particular situation must be transmitted in the interactive communication system in pharmacy (CIP)
 - MK: to generate a temporary NAM as part of a free program

References:

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3. Tsuyuki RT, et al. Canadian national consensus guidelines for naloxone prescribing by pharmacists. *Can Pharm J (Ott)*. 2020;153(6):347-351.
4. NARCAN® Nasal Spray (naloxone HCl) 4 mg/0.1 mL [product monograph]. Oakville, Ontario: Emergent BioSolutions Canada Inc.; 2021.
5. Régie de l'assurance maladie du Québec (RAMQ) Infolettre 046. May 9, 2018. www.ramq.gouv.qc.ca/SiteCollectionDocuments/professionnels/infolettres/2018/info046-8.pdf.
6. List of Medications. Régie de l'assurance maladie du Québec (RAMQ). September 27, 2023. www.ramq.gouv.qc.ca/sites/default/files/documents/non_indexes/liste-med-2023-09-27-en.pdf.
7. Régie de l'assurance maladie du Québec (RAMQ) Infolettre 304. February 3, 2021. www.ramq.gouv.qc.ca/SiteCollectionDocuments/professionnels/infolettres/2021/info304-20.pdf.
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