

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 19, 2020

Health 20-3361

PROVINCE LIFTS LIMIT ON FILLING OF PRESCRIPTIONS

Effective May 20, the Saskatchewan government is lifting the supply limits on prescription drugs that were introduced to guard against drug shortages.

Saskatchewan residents who have prescriptions for long-term medications will be able to fill prescriptions as they did prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, except in limited situations where a specific drug remains in short supply.

The COVID-19 pandemic outbreak resulted in significant shortages for certain drugs and uncertainty regarding the overall Canadian drug supply. To manage drugs in short supply and prevent further shortages, Saskatchewan took decisive action to manage the drug supply to ensure that all patients, especially those most vulnerable, would have continued access to necessary medications.

On March 18, Saskatchewan, along with many other provinces and territories, limited prescription fills to one month to ensure the continued supply and to prevent the stockpiling of prescription medications with some exceptions for drugs on a specified maintenance list.

"As we navigate the unknowns presented by COVID-19, ensuring the availability of medications for all Saskatchewan residents is a priority," Health Minister Jim Reiter said. "Today, the drug supply is in a more stable position due to the actions of pharmacists, patients and other stakeholders in response to the prescription limits. We sincerely thank them for their support and understanding."

"We continue to support the Ministry of Health's careful management through this challenge to ensure Saskatchewan residents get the medications they need," Pharmacy Association of Saskatchewan CEO Dawn Martin said. "Front-line pharmacists work hard every day for their patients, and will continue to do so through this difficult and unpredictable time."

The supply limits did not affect most Saskatchewan residents, as 87 per cent of Saskatchewan prescriptions are filled for a 34-day supply of medication.

"As the pharmacy regulatory body, we are supportive of the decision to remove the restrictions that were put in place to support the drug supply chain during the early days of COVID-19," Saskatchewan College of Pharmacy Professionals Registrar Jeana Wendel said. "As a result of these measures, the drug supply chain has stabilized; however, it remains critical for pharmacists to ensure they are being stewards of the drug supply to ensure all Saskatchewan residents can continue to receive the medications they need."

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Though the majority of the Canadian drug supply is more stable, some drugs (e.g. salbutamol inhalers) and drug classes (e.g. sedatives and antibiotics) are in short supply. For these medications, pharmacists will use their judgement and dispense appropriate quantities. The drug supply is being actively monitored, at federal and provincial levels, as the pandemic evolves.

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