

FACT SHEET

Prescription Transfers

A fact sheet is a plain-language explanation of the legislation that forms the foundation of certain pharmacy practices. It provides useful information and references to help pharmacy professionals understand a particular topic. A fact sheet is an informational resource and is not considered legal advice. Always refer to the legislation for full context.

Legislative References

- [Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, 1996](#) (CDSA)
 - [Controlled Substances Regulations](#) (CSR) s 102, 119
- [Drug and Pharmacies Regulation Act, 1990](#), s 157
 - [Ontario Regulation 264/16](#), s 5
- [Food and Drugs Act, 1985](#)
 - [Food and Drug Regulations](#), s. C.01.041.1 – C.01.041.4
 - [Prescription Drug List \(PDL\)](#)
- [Public Hospitals Act, 1990](#)
 - [R.R.O. 1990, Reg. 965](#), s 22.1

Additional References

- [Code of Ethics](#)
- [Legal Authority for Scope of Practice and Authorized Acts Chart](#)
- Controlled Substances: [Prescription Regulation Summary Chart](#)
- [Prescription Refills, Part-Fills and Intervals Fact Sheet](#)

Definitions

Controlled substance: A substance set out in Schedules I, II, III, IV, or Part 1 of V of the federal *Controlled Drug and Substances Act*. Where applicable, this resource applies to the substances named in Schedule 1 (narcotics), Schedule 2 (controlled drugs) and Schedule 3 (targeted substances) under the *Controlled Substances Regulations*.

Background

Prescription transfers are subject to federal and provincial regulations.

This Fact Sheet is intended for community pharmacies only, as the transfer of records between hospitals is governed by *R.R.O. 1990, Reg. 965 -- Hospital Management* (s 22.1) under the provincial *Public Hospitals Act*.

- Federally, the *Food and Drug Regulations* permit a pharmacist or pharmacy technician to transfer a prescription for a drug on the Prescription Drug List to another pharmacist or pharmacy technician.
- Federally, the *Controlled Substances Regulations* permit a pharmacist or pharmacy technician to transfer a prescription for a controlled substance (narcotic, controlled drug or targeted substance) to another pharmacist or pharmacy technician.
 - Transfers for controlled substances can only be made within 2 years from the date the pharmacy received the prescription
- Provincially, *Ontario Regulation 264/16* states that “Subject to compliance with any other applicable federal or provincial laws, a prescription shall be transferred from a pharmacy that is accredited as a community pharmacy on the request of the patient or a person acting on behalf of the patient.”

Patient Request and Consent

A prescription is to be transferred from a pharmacy upon the request of the patient or a person acting on behalf of the patient. The transfer occurs between pharmacy professionals at the transferring pharmacy and at the receiving pharmacy.

- For the purposes of the regulations, a person acting on behalf of the patient includes a pharmacy professional acting on behalf of the patient.
- Where there are refills or any quantity remaining, a pharmacy must transfer a prescription when requested.
 - Either the pharmacy transferring the prescription or the pharmacy receiving the prescription transfer can act upon a patient’s request.
- Prescriptions cannot be transferred if there are no refills or quantity remaining, however a copy of the prescription can be provided.
 - A copy must be marked as such and is not an authorized prescription for dispensing at another pharmacy.
- Implied consent is provided by the patient when they request a prescription transfer.
 - There is no need for a pharmacy to contact the patient to verify the transfer request; Delaying a transfer for this reason interferes with continuity of care.

Obligations of Pharmacy Professionals

Registrants are expected to respect the patient’s right to choose their pharmacy and/or pharmacy professional and to facilitate the patient’s request to transfer pharmacy services, ensuring the relevant patient information is provided efficiently for a safe and effective transition of care.

- Transfers should be done in a timely manner, the urgency of which is based on the patient’s needs.
 - If circumstances arise that result in a delay, as a professional courtesy, the pharmacy awaiting the transfer (and if necessary, the patient) should be informed.
- If necessary, transfers can be made verbally.
 - Additional steps should be taken to minimize the increased risk of medication errors with telephone or verbal communication¹.

- Transfers can only be received from a pharmacy professional in a pharmacy licenced or accredited in a Canadian jurisdiction.
- Transfers may be sent from a pharmacy professional in Ontario to a pharmacy professional or practitioner with the authority to dispense the prescription, even if they are in another jurisdiction.
- For a prescription with more than one drug the pharmacy must retain the original prescription on the patient record, even if they do not dispense all drugs.
 - Should the patient wish to have the remaining drug(s) filled at another pharmacy, those prescriptions can first be placed on hold (logged) then transferred.
 - The pharmacy receiving the transfer should receive a copy of the original prescription, as a best practice in the interest of patient safety.
- If a pharmacy wishes to charge the patient for a transfer, the [Fees for Professional Pharmacy Services Policy](#) applies. The Designated Manager may invoice the patient however this cannot impede the provision of patient care or prevent or delay the transfer from occurring in a timely manner.

Information to be provided when transferring a prescription

- Name and address of the patient
- Name and strength (if applicable) of the drug prescribed
- The manufacturer or brand name of the drug last dispensed
- Directions for use as prescribed
- Name and address of the prescriber
- Identification number of the prescription (i.e., prescription number)
- Quantity last dispensed, if different from the quantity prescribed
- Number of authorized refills and/or total authorized quantity remaining
 - If applicable, the specified interval between refills
 - The entire quantity remaining on the prescription must be transferred
- Date the prescription was first dispensed
- Date the last refill was dispensed, if applicable
 - If transferring a prescription that has not been dispensed yet (i.e., on hold, unfilled, logged) a copy of the original prescription should accompany the transfer
- Name of the pharmacy professional responsible for the transfer
- Additional requirements for controlled substances:
 - A copy of the written prescription or the written record of a verbal prescription
 - The date the prescription was originally received by the pharmacy

Record requirements when transferring a prescription

Once a prescription has been transferred, it must be inactivated so it cannot be dispensed by, or transferred from, that pharmacy again.

- This does not prevent the receiving pharmacy from subsequently transferring the prescription to another pharmacy or back to the same pharmacy that transferred it to them

The pharmacy professional responsible for the transfer must record the following:

- Their name
- Date of the transfer
- Name and address of the pharmacy to which the prescription was transferred
- For verbal transfers, the name of the pharmacy professional receiving the transfer

Record requirements when receiving a transferred prescription

The pharmacy professional receiving the prescription transfer must record the information provided by the transferring pharmacy, along with the following:

- Name and address of the pharmacy from which the prescription was transferred
- For verbal transfers:
 - Their name
 - An authorized (“signed”) verbal prescription created because of the transfer,
- Additional requirements for controlled substances:
 - A copy of the written prescription or the written record of a verbal prescription
 - The date the prescription was originally received by the transferring pharmacy

Published: October 2026

Version #: 4.0

Revision History

Version #	Date	Action
1.0	August 2013	Fact sheet published
1.1	August 2016	Changed reference from O. Reg. 58/11 to O. Reg. 264/16
2.0	March 2020	Added “Important update regarding the novel coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic” re: Health Canada Controlled Drugs and Substances Act (CDSA) subsection 56(1) class exemption to permit pharmacists to transfer prescriptions of controlled substances.
3.0	November 2021	Updated format; incorporated CDSA Class Exemption
4.0	October 2026	Updated to reflect new <i>Controlled Substances Regulations</i> ; minor content revisions for improved flow and clarity

¹ Refer to: <https://www.ismp-canada.org/download/safetyBulletins/2020/ISMPCSB2020-i4TelephoneOrders.pdf>; <https://www.ismp-canada.org/download/cacn/CACCN-Spring06.pdf>