

Pharmacist-prescribed controlled substances effectively used to support continuity of care during the pandemic

Health Canada issued an **exemption to the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act (CDSA)** in March 2020 allowing pharmacists to act as prescribers of controlled substances to support continuity of care during the COVID-19 pandemic.

From January 2019 to December 2021, the number of pharmacist-prescribed claims in Ontario increased significantly by:

1.5x
for
opioids

(160 to 393
claims per week)

9.6x
for
benzodiazepines

(49 to 515
claims per week)

21.5x
for
stimulants

(8 to 177
claims per week)



Longer opioid claims

(>30 day supply) in general
decreased by **60%**

Pharmacist-prescribed claims



overall increased by
154% (0.10% to 0.26%
per month)

yet the absolute rate was **<2%**
of total prescribed claims



Highlights & Recommendations:

These findings highlight the **demand for pharmacist intervention** and the potential for pharmacists to serve as the **last line of defense in ensuring continuity of care**. Low prescribing rates and opioid claims of longer duration suggest this exemption may be underused and require further research.