

Information for Pharmacists

Drug Shortage Notice – Salbutamol Metered Dose Inhalers

Effective May 6, 2020

Please include this Procedure in your Drug Programs Information Network (DPIN) Manual under Section 4: Claims Submission.

- Data for salbutamol inhalers identified that there was a three-fold increase in the demand in the first 3 weeks of March 2020. As such, there is variable supply of commercially available metered dose inhalers (MDI's); all products are currently noted as “short” and on allocation.
- This has resulted in a Tier 3 shortage, which by definition is “a situation when a manufacturer/importer is unable to meet demand for the drug. A Tier 3 shortage is a shortage with the greatest potential impact on the Canada drug supply and healthcare systems by virtue of availability of alternate supplies, ingredients, or therapies.” Tier 3 also allows for Health Canada to authorize importation, as available.
- Restrictions have been put in place by wholesalers and distributors to limit the supply of salbutamol which means that most patients will receive only one salbutamol inhaler or a one-month supply at the time.
- To help mitigate this critical shortage, Shared Health is outlining the following guidelines for pharmacists:
 1. Order the full allocation quantity available of MDI's from your designated wholesaler on a weekly basis – if you have excess supply please email PDPIInfoAudit@gov.mb.ca with the subject line “**COVID-19 Shortage - Salbutamol MDI.**”
 2. Please indicate “one inhaler” as the dispensing quantity on any prescription in an effort to reduce patient stockpiling and maintain pharmacy supply (adding refills are encouraged);
 3. Encourage patients to not discard recently expired inhalers (e.g. expired in the last 6 months with dosages remaining in the canister) until they have obtained a replacement. Ensure patients are aware that if they need to use their reliever inhaler and only have an expired inhaler, it may be less potent. If patients have used an expired inhaler and are not getting relief, they should seek medical attention.
 4. Consider prescribing an alternative product for patients that are new to therapy, for “prn” use, or where the patient is not being prescribed a salbutamol MDI for chronic or

established therapy. Pharmacies have a greater ability to order and stock alternative products.

5. The following alternatives, as recommended by the Canadian Thoracic Society, which are all benefits on the Manitoba Pharmacare Formulary) should be prescribed preferentially:

- Mitigation strategy for the treatment of asthma: https://cts-sct.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/FINAL-April-13_CTS-re-Asthma-Salbutamol-Shortage.pdf
- Mitigation strategy for the treatment of COPD: https://cts-sct.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/FINAL_April-13-CTS-re-COPD-Salbutamol-Shortage.pdf

If both commercially available product and clinical alternatives cannot be obtained, please send an email to: PDPIInfoAudit@gov.mb.ca

with the subject line **“COVID-19 Shortage - Salbutamol MDI”**.

You will receive an email response on the process to obtain “Emergency Supply”.

If your questions are not answered by reviewing the Claims Submission Procedures and FAQs posted at:

<https://www.gov.mb.ca/health/pharmacare/healthprofessionals.html>

Please send an e-mail to PDPIInfoAudit@gov.mb.ca.