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Canada announces new measures to prevent drug shortages

From: [Health Canada](#)

News release

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Drug shortages remain a global challenge and COVID-19 has increased demand for certain drugs, adding to the complexity of ensuring drug supply where it is needed. The Government of Canada remains steadfast in its efforts to ensure Canadians have access to the medications they need, when they need them.

Canada is a small market, representing 2% of global drug sales, that sources 68% of its drugs internationally. The need for vigilance in maintaining the national drug supply continues.

In 2017, the Government of Canada added requirements for manufacturers to report drug shortages publicly. Today, the Honourable Patty Hajdu, Minister of Health, announces new measures to protect Canada's drug supply from bulk importations that could worsen drug shortages in Canada.

Starting November 27, certain drugs intended for the Canadian market are prohibited from being distributed for consumption outside of Canada if that sale would cause or worsen a drug shortage. Companies will now also be required to provide information to assess existing or potential shortages, when requested, and within 24 hours if there is a serious or imminent health risk.

Quotes

“Our health care system is a symbol of our national identity and we are committed to defending it. The actions we are taking today will help protect Canadians’ access to the medication they rely on.”

The Honourable Patty Hajdu
Minister of Health

Quick facts

- Ensuring Canadians have access to the medications they need is a top priority for the Government of Canada. Health Canada continues to take action in collaboration with provinces and territories, industry and healthcare professional associations to prevent and alleviate the impact of drug shortages on Canadians.
- The measures announced today build on consultations started in 2019 with the healthcare community to respond to the United States (U.S.) *Importation of Prescription Drugs* rule, which comes into effect November 30, 2020. This rule creates a pathway to allow licensed U.S. pharmacists or wholesalers to import in bulk certain prescription drugs intended for the Canadian market.
- Canada has repeatedly stated that this rule would not be an effective approach to reducing drug prices in the U.S. since the Canadian market is small, representing only 2% of global pharmaceutical sales compared to 44% for the U.S.
- Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, Canada has taken action to reduce drug shortages with an Interim Order allowing exceptional importation and sale to help prevent shortages in relation

to COVID-19, signed on March 30, and the Interim Order respecting the prevention and alleviation of shortages of drugs in relation to COVID-19, signed on October 16.

Related products

- [Backgrounder: Interim Order Respecting Drug Shortages \(Safeguarding the Drug Supply\)](#)

Associated links

- [Interim Order Respecting Drug Shortages \(Safeguarding the Drug Supply\)](#)
- [Interim Order Respecting Drug Shortages \(Safeguarding the Drug Supply\): Notice](#)
- [Interim Order Respecting Drug Shortages \(Safeguarding the Drug Supply\): Guidance document](#)

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