

Opioid Dependency Treatment During COVID-19 Pandemic

CPSNL Resource - Opioid Agonist Treatment (OAT) Guidance During the COVID-19 Pandemic

The College of Physicians and Surgeons of NL has released the document [Opioid Agonist Treatment \(OAT\) Guidance During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)

This document is meant to support OAT clinical practice decision making and patient care during this pandemic.

NL Prescription Drug Program Update – Methadone now listed as an open benefit

The NL Prescription Drug Program (NLPDP) has listed Methadone as an open benefit.

- The requirement for special authorization for methadone carries has been removed and pharmacy fees for daily dispenses will be covered by NLPDP as negotiated with Pharmacy Association of NL (PANL).
- These changes are temporary for the duration of the pandemic and will be re-assessed when we resume normal operations.
- Please note any decision regarding the approval for carries for methadone remains a clinical decision by the prescriber. The decision will involve consideration of the balance of the public health risk due to COVID-19 and the public/patient risk of diversion and overdose.

Note to physicians – Impact of NLPDP policy direction:

The NLPDP has heard from people requiring ODT and their care providers, including physicians, that the NLPDP special authorization requirements for methadone and the daily dispense fees for carries were significant barriers to access.

ODT prescribers will be impacted by this change in NLPDP policy as they may be asked by patients to provide carries. Approving carries remains a clinical decision based on many factors, including stability of the patient, housing arrangements, and risk for diversion and overdose.

Some people may have been previously approved clinically for carries, but they could not afford the fees that pharmacies charged, this cost barrier has now been addressed through this policy direction.

Methadone carries may still not be appropriate for some patients based on clinical judgement.

The CPSNL document, [Opioid Agonist Treatment \(OAT\) Guidance During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#) , will provide valuable direction to support your clinical assessment of ODT patients.



COVID-19 – SUPPORTING PEOPLE REQUIRING OPIOID DEPENDENCE TREATMENT (ODT)

People who require assistance related to opioid use disorder or opioid agonist maintenance treatment, such as methadone or suboxone, should not be directed to go to their local emergency department in order to receive methadone or suboxone, unless they are seriously ill. Instead, people are encouraged to:

- Contact their regional ODT Hubs. These hubs provide rapid access to treatment, and are also available to consult with and support community-based physicians, nurse practitioners, nurses, pharmacists, and counsellors upon request.

St. John's
Building 532
80 Charter Avenue (Pleasantville)
(709) 752-4478

Gander
Memorial Drive East
(709) 256-1356

Corner Brook
35 Boones Road
(709) 634-4506

Stephenville
127 Montana Drive
(709) 643-8740

Happy Valley-Goose Bay
227 Hamilton River Rd
(709) 285-8365

- Contact their primary care provider (physician or nurse practitioner) or methadone or suboxone prescriber.
- Refer to their local pharmacist.
- Call the Provincial Mental Health & Addictions Systems Navigator, Barry Hewitt, at 1-877-999-7589, Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
- Visit <https://www.health.gov.nl.ca/health/naloxonekits/> for a list of local sites that provide naloxone kits.
- Inform people of the Safe Works Access Program at (709) 757-7927 (SWAP) or (709) 634-7927 (SWAP).
- Share www.BridgetheGapp.ca for many free, local mental health and addictions resources and programs available to people of all ages.