

Narcotic Transition Services (NTS)

As of March 4, 2023, **designated narcotic drugs** that are prescribed for Opioid Use Disorder (OUD) **must only** be prescribed by a licensed AHS Opioid Dependency Program (ODP) clinic and **must only** be dispensed by pharmacies contracted by AHS to support Narcotic Transition Services (NTS).

Prescriptions for OUD for non-designated narcotic drugs (e.g., methadone, suboxone and slow-release oral morphine [SROM]) can be prescribed by any authorized prescriber and dispensed by any licensed pharmacy.

A pharmacist may dispense a prescription of a designated narcotic drug directly to a patient **if the prescription is not indicated for an OUD** (e.g., cancer pain, post-surgery, etc.).

Designated Narcotic Drugs

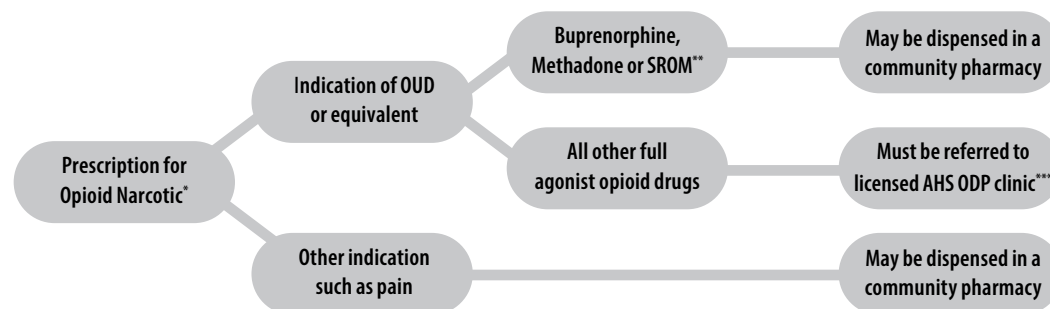
Designated Narcotic Drugs are any full agonist opioid drug with the exception of methadone and SROM. Examples of designated narcotic drugs are

- Hydromorphone
- Diacetylmorphine (pharmaceutical heroin)
- Fentanyl
- Morphine
- Oxycodone

Background and overview of requirements

In October 2022, the Alberta government amended the **Mental Health Services Protection Regulation** (Regulation) and introduced the **Community Protection and Opioid Stewardship Standards** (Standards). The Regulation and Standards create NTS and introduce new requirements for treating OUD using designated narcotic drugs.

The schematic below shows what pharmacists may do when they receive a prescription for an opioid medication.



* Where there is no indication provided, do not dispense. Contact the prescriber to include indication for use.

** This includes all brands of slow-, sustained-, extended- or controlled-release oral morphine, not just Kadian.

*** The AHS Opioid Dependency Program should be contacted at 1-866-332-2322.

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PHARMACY BENEFACT

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OUD indications and other equivalent terminology

Pharmacists must ensure every designated narcotic drug prescription dispensed has an indication provided by the prescriber and must determine if the prescription is indicated for OUD.

Examples include the following:

1. Opioid Agonist Therapy (OAT/ODT) when checked on a TPP prescription form.
2. The following indications indicated under “Other (Specify)” on a TPP prescription form:
 - Opioid Abuse Disorder (OAD)
 - Opioid Addiction
 - Opioid Use Disorder (OUD)
 - Substance Use Disorder (SUD)

Designated narcotic drugs for any of the indications above must be prescribed **only** for NTS by a licensed AHS Opioid Dependency Program (ODP) clinic. In addition, these drugs cannot be dispensed directly to the patient.

Resources

For more information on NTS, including information on how to connect with a licensed AHS ODP clinic, please contact the AHS Opioid Dependency Program at 1-866-332-2322.

At Alberta Blue Cross®, we are committed to ensuring the integrity of the benefit plans and programs that the Government of Alberta entrusts us to administer. Compliance verification reviews will occur to validate that dispensed designated narcotic drug prescriptions are in accordance with program rules.

For assistance with benefit or claim inquiries, please contact an Alberta Blue Cross Pharmacy Services Provider Relations contact centre representative at

780-498-8370 (Edmonton and area)

403-294-4041 (Calgary and area)

1-800-361-9632 (toll free)

FAX 780-498-8406 (Edmonton and area)

FAX 1-877-305-9911 (toll free)

Alberta Blue Cross offers online access to current Pharmacy Benefacts and supplemental claiming information to assist with the submission of your direct bill drug claims.

Visit ab.bluecross.ca/providers/pharmacy-home.php

