

## Professional Notice

**To:** Pharmacy Practitioners

**From:** Nova Scotia College of Pharmacists

**Date:** November 24, 2022

**Re:** Shortage of Children's Acetaminophen and Ibuprofen: Information and Resources

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The national acetaminophen and ibuprofen shortage has placed unprecedented strain on our pediatric emergency departments as families seek to access this essential treatment for pain and fever. As drug therapy experts, pharmacists have the skills and expertise to help families navigate this shortage until supply normalizes.

The answers to the following questions are being provided to support you in this role.

### When can pharmacies expect to start receiving supply of acetaminophen and ibuprofen?

- [Health Canada has announced](#) increased stock is coming in the next 1-2 weeks, but it is unclear how much of this stock will be distributed to community pharmacies.

### What are my responsibilities to the patient?

- The [NSCP Code of Ethics](#) states that you take all reasonable steps to provide appropriate medications and services to your patients – to help people meet their drug-related needs and to ensure patient care is not jeopardized. In a drug shortage this includes:
  - Providing the parent/caregiver with information on where they might be able to obtain the medication elsewhere
  - Instructing the parent/caregiver on alternate dosage forms such as:
    - suppositories
    - adapting adult preparations for pediatric dosing
  - Compounding the medication (if appropriate and if able to do so)

### What do I need to know if I'm compounding acetaminophen and/or ibuprofen during the shortage?

- [Health Canada has communicated](#) that it does **not object** to compounding of these products without a prescription during this shortage. However, compounding must take place within a patient-healthcare professional relationship – it cannot be sold as an OTC product without the involvement of a pharmacist and appropriate documentation.
- Pharmacists must ensure that the individual is appropriately counselled, and any compounded product is appropriately labelled including:
  - the name of the individual for whom the medication is intended;
  - the concentration/strength and quantity of the medication in the container;

- clear instructions for dosing; and
- a beyond use date.
- Pharmacy managers must ensure that the documentation enables contacting patients and/or their caregivers in the event of a recall.
  - A recent incident in British Columbia involved multiple patients receiving compounded product labeled with the wrong concentration/strength. Inadequate documentation compromised tracking and delayed patient notification.

**What can I do to support informing/educating parents/caregivers?**

- Consider placing signage where acetaminophen/ibuprofen products are normally available that alerts parents/caregivers to the shortage, provides answers to some common questions, and encourages them to speak to a pharmacist for assistance.

**Available resources include:**

- [Information for families and caregivers on children's fever and pain medication](#) (CPhA)
- [Children's ibuprofen/acetaminophen shortage: What you should know and do](#) (Health Canada)
- [Six steps to success in pill swallowing](#) (IWK Health)
- [Oral Acetaminophen Dosing: Tablet Options](#) (IWK Health)