

# Neighbourhood Pharmacies Calls on Provinces to Implement a COVID Test-to-Treat program through Pharmacy

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**Neighbourhood Pharmacy Association of Canada**

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**TORONTO, April 13, 2022** / As Canada heads into the sixth wave of COVID-19 and grapples with rising case counts and hospitalizations, Neighbourhood Pharmacies congratulates the province of Quebec for fully leveraging community pharmacy's involvement in a test-to-treat COVID-19 antiviral strategy.

Using a test-to-treat strategy, patients receive a COVID-19 test, are prescribed the appropriate medication if eligible, and have the medication dispensed to them, all during a single interaction. As community health hubs, pharmacies are uniquely suited to support the health system in delivering this strategy by prescribing and dispensing antivirals such as Paxlovid™.

Since Health Canada approved Paxlovid™ (nirmatrelvir and ritonavir) as an oral antiviral therapy for the virus, there has been much progress in overcoming the challenges of timely access to care for COVID-19 patients. For the effective use of Paxlovid™, an individual who has tested positive must begin taking the antiviral therapy within five days of symptom onset.

Canada is now leading the way in embedding community pharmacies into nimble COVID-19 antiviral pathways. Pharmacies in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Quebec, Atlantic provinces, and most recently, Ontario have become involved in dispensing this medication to reach patients quickly.

Last week, Quebec became the first jurisdiction in the world to put in place all elements of a 'test-to-treat' strategy. Quebec pharmacies can now provide the full spectrum of testing, patient assessment, disease identification, prescribing and medication dispensing, nearly doubling access points and prescriptions within days. Since April 1, when pharmacies first became involved in the Paxlovid™ program in Quebec, there has been an increase of 332% in antiviral therapies dispensed, demonstrating that pharmacy involvement significantly improves access to this critical therapy.

"By ensuring Canada's community pharmacies are enabled to test, prescribe, and dispense COVID-19 antiviral therapy, we eliminate barriers to accessing care and support patients and the healthcare system by preventing hospitalizations," says Sandra Hanna, Neighbourhood Pharmacies CEO.

"Community pharmacies have proven they can rapidly scale up these services, adding another vital tool in the public health toolbox and helping Canadians get back to a new normal."

## **About the Neighbourhood Pharmacy Association of Canada**

Neighbourhood Pharmacies is a national, not-for-profit trade association that delivers insights and solutions as a knowledgeable, experienced stakeholder and sought-after thought leader in public health, primary care, and policy development. With a distinct, pan-Canadian perspective on the frontlines of healthcare and a high-performing leadership role in community health, we are the voice of the pharmacy business in Canada, representing our member organizations as a trusted partner to government within and across jurisdictions. We represent pharmacy organizations with varied business models, including chain, banner, grocery, specialty, long-term care, and mass merchandisers with pharmacies. We leverage the diverse strength of our members and partners, including the pharmaceutical supply chain and manufacturers, and work together with the common policy objective to improve access to healthcare.

Our Association represents the delivery of care through close to 11,000 pharmacies, where pharmacy teams serve as integrated healthcare hubs, creating capacity in local communities across Canada. Our purpose is to advocate for community pharmacy's potential to improve Canadians' health and contribute as sustainable partners to the shared vision of a robust, resilient health system.

Related Links: <https://www.neighbourhoodpharmacies.ca/>

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