RECENT PHARMACY CLOSURES: HOW TO OBTAIN SERVICES
June 1, 2020

The Board has been informed that many pharmacies have been damaged due to the recent unrest. Others have been temporarily closed as a precautionary measure. Here is some information and advice for patients who are trying to get prescriptions filled. You can call the Board at (651)201-2825 or send an e-mail to: pha.inspector.hlb@state.mn.us if you have questions.

- Try to call the pharmacy that you normally use. The chain pharmacies that have been affected will either automatically transfer you to their nearest open pharmacy – or give you the phone number of their nearest open pharmacy. Most chain pharmacies can look up your prescription information – even if you had the prescription filled at a different pharmacy within the chain. Independent pharmacies may also provide you with an alternate number to call.
  - If you would have difficulty travelling to the new pharmacy, ask if the pharmacy will mail or deliver prescriptions to you.
- If you can’t contact the pharmacy that you normally use, go to or call another nearby pharmacy. Another pharmacy can try to contact your doctor to get a new prescription that it can fill for you. Bring your labeled prescription container with you – or have it available if you call the pharmacy.
  - As noted below, the Board of Pharmacy is allowing pharmacies to dispense an emergency supply of medications if the pharmacy can’t get ahold of the prescriber.
  - If you would have difficulty travelling to the new pharmacy, ask if the pharmacy will mail or deliver it to you.
- Pharmacies will need to obtain new prescriptions before they can dispense certain drugs – like stimulants or narcotic pain relievers, such as Percocet or oxycodone.
- Based on communication with the pharmacy chains, the Board believes that many of the pharmacies that temporarily closed as a precaution will reopen in the next couple of days – provided there isn’t further unrest that causes damage to pharmacies.
- The Board’s staff is working with both chain and independent pharmacies to assist them in reopening damaged stores as quickly as possible. We are also working with them to set up temporary pharmacies – hopefully as close to the existing pharmacy as possible. The temporary pharmacies can dispense prescriptions while the existing pharmacy is repaired.
- If you need a new prescription filled, rather than a refill, ask if your doctor can send it to the pharmacy electronically or by fax – so you don’t have deliver it to the pharmacy.
The Board has sent the following question and answer to all Minnesota licensed pharmacies and pharmacists. The Board is waiving some of the laws concerning the filling of prescriptions through at least June 15th.

Q: A patient came to my pharmacy to get a prescription filled because the patient’s regular pharmacy is closed down indefinitely due to the civil unrest occurring in Minnesota. I have been unable to contact the other pharmacy or the prescriber. Can I fill the prescription without getting the required transfer or a new prescription from the prescriber?

A: Yes, provided that:

- The pharmacist has enough information to accurately fill the prescription – for example, the patient presents with a labeled prescription vial or a printout from an online health record system of prescription information;
- In the professional judgement of the pharmacist, the prescription must be filled because the drug is essential to sustain the life of the patient or to continue therapy for a chronic condition and failure to dispense the drug to the patient would result in harm to the health of the patient. Pharmacists must use extra precaution when considering whether or not to dispense Schedule 3 – 5 controlled substances in this manner. Pharmacists should not fill Schedule 2 controlled substances prescriptions without receiving a new prescription; and
- No more than a 30-day supply is dispensed. However, if the standard unit of dispensing for the drug exceeds a 30-day supply, the amount of the drug dispensed or sold must not exceed the standard unit of dispensing. (For example, vials of insulin or boxes of insulin pens).

If the pharmacist does not have enough information to fill the prescription, a limited supply of the medication requested can still be sold to the patient if the pharmacist believes that not supplying at least a limited quantity of the drug would adversely affect the patient’s health. The container should be labeled, at a minimum, with the name and strength of the drug, the patient’s name, and the pharmacy’s name and phone number. This does not apply to controlled substance prescriptions.

Also, if the patient had the prescription originally filled at a chain pharmacy, it may be possible to call another, open pharmacy in that chain to obtain information about the prescription.