

DATE: 9/18/18

MDH is requesting your help to increase tobacco users' access to tobacco cessation resources and to prevent fatal opioid overdoses. You can help by using your existing authority to write prescriptions for over-the-counter tobacco cessation medications and to enter into protocols that allow you to prepare prescriptions for naloxone. Your active participation in these initiatives is central to their success and will help save lives and reduce tobacco- and opioid-related chronic disease and death.

OTC Tobacco Cessation Prescription Authority

Tobacco use remains the number one preventable cause of death and disease in Minnesota with a price tag of more than \$3 billion in excess health care costs annually. To better address the health inequities of Medicaid enrollees — who smoke at twice the rate of the general population — MDH is launching a Medicaid pharmacy initiative to encourage Medical Assistance enrollees to go to their pharmacists for a prescription for over-the-counter (OTC) tobacco cessation nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) medications, including patches, gum and lozenges.

Pharmacists have the opportunity to be a critical resource for Medicaid smokers. Access and use of OTC nicotine replacement therapy dramatically increases the likelihood of a successful quit attempt. With a prescription, Medicaid enrollees have free (no co-pay) access to the OTC nicotine replacement therapy.

Pharmacists *currently* have the authority to write prescriptions for over-the-counter medicine under Minnesota [Statute 256B.0625](#), subd. 13 (d), which gives licensed pharmacists the authority to prescribe and dispense over-the-counter drugs as a covered service for Medical Assistance and MinnesotaCare enrollees.

More information on access to Medicaid tobacco cessation medication can be found at www.health.state.mn.us/divs/hpcd/tpc/quit.html.

Naloxone Prescription Authority

In 2016, the Minnesota Legislature responded to the state's continued increase in opioid overdoses by passing legislation to create a specific opiate antagonist protocol provision in [Minn. Stats. §151.37](#). The provision gives pharmacists, in collaboration with a registered practitioner, the authority to prepare a prescription for naloxone for people at risk for, or who know someone at risk for, opioid overdose. The goal is to increase the availability of naloxone across Minnesota through pharmacies. As required by that provision, the Minnesota Board of Pharmacy has developed a naloxone protocol. Pharmacists may enter into the protocol with any willing physician, nurse practitioner or physician assistant.

Pharmacists who can't find a prescriber willing to enter into the protocol also have the option of entering into the protocol with Minnesota Department of Health Medical Director Ruth Lynfield, MD. To enter this protocol, pharmacists, group pharmacies and chain pharmacies must complete the [Opiate Antagonist Protocol Registration form](#) at their earliest convenience.

More information about protocol options, trainings, and patient referral resources can be found at www.health.state.mn.us/naloxone.

For more information on the pharmacist prescription authority, please contact the MN Board of Pharmacy <https://mn.gov/boards/pharmacy/>.