



New Brunswick College of Pharmacists
Ordre des pharmaciens du Nouveau-Brunswick

GUIDANCE: GROUP A STREPTOCOCCAL (GAS) PHARYNGITIS

Group A Streptococcal (GAS) Pharyngitis

This guidance document supports pharmacists in New Brunswick who choose to include assessment of and prescribing for GAS Pharyngitis as part of practice.

Note: Rapid Antigen Tests (RAT) may not be used for the purpose of diagnosis. Point of care testing (POCT) must be performed using a PCR (polymerase chain reaction)/molecular test.

Introduction

In August and September of 2023, pharmacists at six pilot site pharmacies in New Brunswick were authorized to assess and prescribe treatment for GAS pharyngitis. The authority for this scope of practice, is provided in Appendix 2 of the College Regulations, and demonstrates a commitment to improving patient care through timely diagnosis and appropriate treatment.

Process

To assess patients and to prescribe treatment for GAS pharyngitis, pharmacists and pharmacy technicians must take the necessary steps to be competent. This must include but is not limited to:

- Continuing self-assessment of competence; pharmacists must ensure they are able to recognize when the signs, symptoms and health needs of the patient require referral or emergency medical treatment.
- Completing appropriate¹ education on the assessment and treatment of GAS pharyngitis, that includes a practical component requiring in-person attendance.

Patient Assessment and Prescribing

Pharmacists may assess and prescribe for the treatment of GAS pharyngitis in patients 3 years of age or older. Pharmacists are to collaborate with other healthcare professionals in providing patient care by establishing clear communication channels, maintaining patient confidentiality, and preventing duplicate testing.

- The College will not require the use of a particular PCR/molecular test for GAS testing. All point of care tests and related materials must comply with requirements found in the College document "[Administering and Interpreting Point of Care Tests Policy](#)."
- The pharmacy manager shall establish, implement and maintain a standard operating procedure for each POCT (see POCT policy for additional reference) it performs.

¹ Appropriate education, containing an in-person practical component, includes:

- Education acquired as part of a CCCAP accredited pharmacy program
- Education accredited by a recognized accrediting agency (for example, CCCEP, Dal CPE)
- Approved by another pharmacy regulatory authority in Canada

- The clinic space must comply with requirements in Regulations and College guidance, as they pertain to provision of pharmacist prescribing and administration of POCT.
- A pharmacist may direct a pharmacy technician to conduct a POCT as outlined in the College's POCT policy.
- A pharmacy professional must obtain informed and voluntary consent from the patient when administering a POCT. Consent can be written, verbal, or implied (see page 7-8 of the [Common Ailments Orientation](#)).
- Before administering a POCT, a pharmacist must complete a thorough history and physical examination, which must be appropriately documented.²
- After patient assessment and if a POCT was administered, a pharmacist is responsible for documenting the assessment and subsequent actions, and following up on POCT results.
- If the patient must be referred to another health care provider, the pharmacist is responsible for actions consistent with continuity of care until that provider has assumed responsibility.
- Pharmacists must assess and prescribe for GAS pharyngitis based on clinical appropriateness, cost-effectiveness, and the patients' best interests.

Suggested Clinical tools

- Vitalite FirstLine – Clinical Decisions (app)
- Horizon FirstLine – Clinical Decisions (app)
- IWK Health Centre FirstLine – Clinical Decisions (app)
- Canadian Pediatric Society Group A streptococcal (GAS) pharyngitis: A practical guide to diagnosis and treatment (Link: <https://cps.ca/documents/position/group-a-streptococcal>)
- Bugs and Drugs 2.0 (Link: <http://www.bugsanddrugs.ca/>) and app
- Sanford Guide to Antimicrobial Treatment 2022 (Link: <https://www.sanfordguide.com/>) and app

Educational opportunities

- Dalhousie University: A Community Pharmacists Guide to Assessing and Treating Pharyngitis. <https://www.dal.ca/faculty/health/cpe/programs1/PHARYNGITIS.html>

² Consider use of a validated scoring tool (for example, Centor, Modified Centor) along with a physical examination