

RN PRESCRIBING FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. How will NSCN uphold public safety with the introduction of RN prescribing?

NSCN's role is to ensure that Nova Scotians receive safe care from nurses. With the introduction of the RN prescriber role in Nova Scotia, we have developed a [regulatory framework](#) to ensure only those who have the necessary knowledge, skill and advanced education qualify to be authorized as an RN prescriber. This framework ensures RN prescribers understand what is expected of them and they are prepared to provide safe, ethical care to patients in Nova Scotia.

To meet our legislated public safety mandate, NSCN is responsible to:

- develop the standards and competencies for RN prescribers
- develop resources to support RN prescribers in their prescribing practice
- license nurses and authorize RN prescribers
- take action when an RN prescriber does not provide safe and appropriate care

2. What is an RN prescriber?

An RN prescriber is a registered nurse with an expanded scope of practice which enables them to prescribe medications and devices and order relevant screening or diagnostic tests within their specific area of prescribing competence and practice. RN prescribers have completed additional education and met additional registration requirements.

3. What is the difference between an RN prescriber and a nurse practitioner?

RN Prescribing is not as broad as NP prescribing. RN Prescribers have completed additional education and have a defined and limited expanded scope of practice. They may only prescribe for clients with specific conditions and in practice settings as defined by their employer. RN Prescribers cannot prescribe controlled drugs and substances, methadone, investigational agents, or medical cannabis.

NPs have completed a graduate level program and they have a very broad scope of practice. They may prescribe for any client under their care.

4. Will the RN prescriber role replace the nurse practitioner's role in prescribing?

No. The RN prescriber will not replace or duplicate services currently provided by other prescribers such as nurse practitioners or physicians. They are intended to complement existing services and improve access to health care for all Nova Scotians.

5. Where is RN prescribing education offered?

The RN Prescribing Certificate Program is offered at Dalhousie University. Please contact Dalhousie University if you have questions about the program.

6. Can any RN complete the program?

Currently, the program is only open to RNs who are currently working in clinical areas where their employer has indicated there is a need for enhanced or improved access to care. RNs must be formally endorsed by their employer to enroll in Dalhousie University's RN Prescribing Certificate Program. The first cohort of learners will complete the RN Prescribing Certificate Program in December 2021 and February 2022.

7. Will all RNs be expected to prescribe?

Currently, RN prescribing is limited to a few sites within Nova Scotia Health/IWK Health Centre where it has been determined that RN prescribing can help to improve access to care.

8. Once authorized to prescribe, can an RN prescriber prescribe for any client or in any care area?

No. Once authorized, the RN prescriber may only prescribe for clients with conditions and in practice settings as identified by their employer.

9. What medications are RNs able to prescribe?

The RN prescribers will be prescribing from a pre-approved list of medications developed by NSH/IWK. RN prescribers may not prescribe controlled drugs and substances, methadone, medical cannabis, or investigational agents.

10. What is the RN prescribers accountability?

The RN prescriber provides care independently within the health care team and is accountable for their prescribing actions and decisions. The RN prescriber may not be the most responsible health care provider for a client. The most responsible health care provider has the overall responsibility for directing and coordinating the care and management of the client. RN prescribers are expected to consult, collaborate, or refer the client to the most appropriate health care provider when the clients prescribing or care needs exceed their individual or professional scope of practice or competence.

11. How will I know an RN is authorized to prescribe?

The registration and licensure details under the [Search A Nurse](#) function on the NSCN website will note “Authorized to Prescribe” and/or RN-AP.

12. Can I process a prescription written by an RN prescriber?

Yes. Prescriptions written by an RN prescriber can be processed as you would any prescription.

13. Where can more information on RN prescribing be found?

Practice support tools and additional information on RN prescribing are available on the NSCN website [here](#).

14. Where can any additional questions on RN prescribing be directed?

NSCN Practice Consultants are available to help answer any questions on RN prescribing. Please contact practice@nscn.ca for assistance. They will respond as quickly as possible.