Medication Safety Self-Assessment
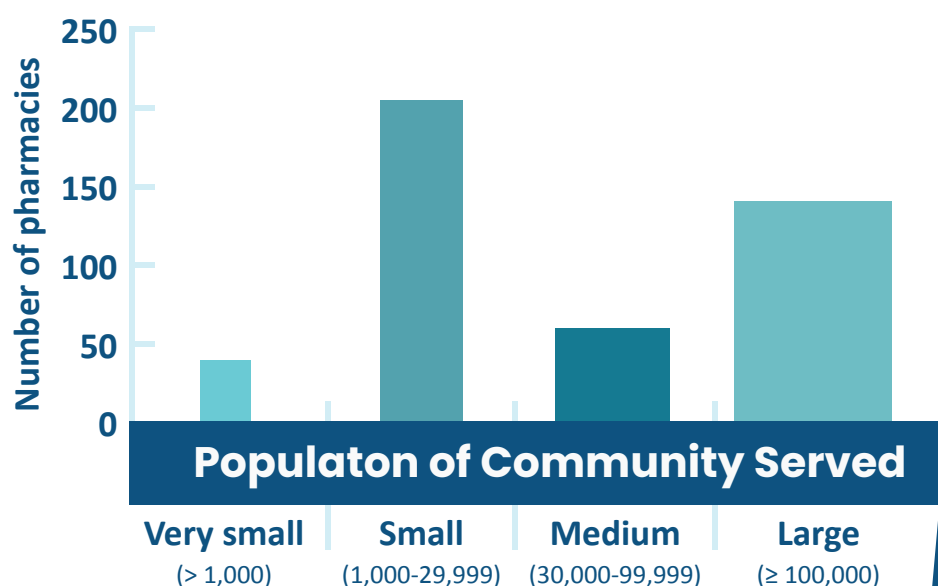# Community Pharmacy

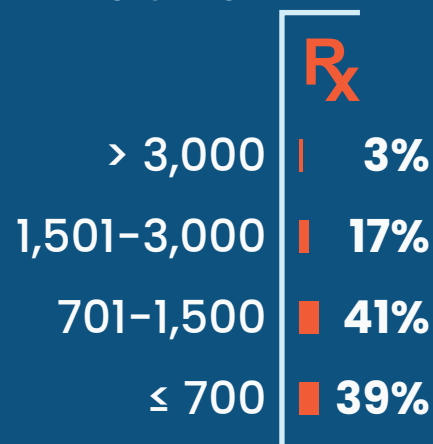**ismp** CANADA

Data Spotlight
2025

The Medication Safety Self-Assessment® for Community Pharmacy (MSSA-CP) is designed to help community pharmacy teams identify and address vulnerabilities that could lead to medication incidents and patient harm.

National Data
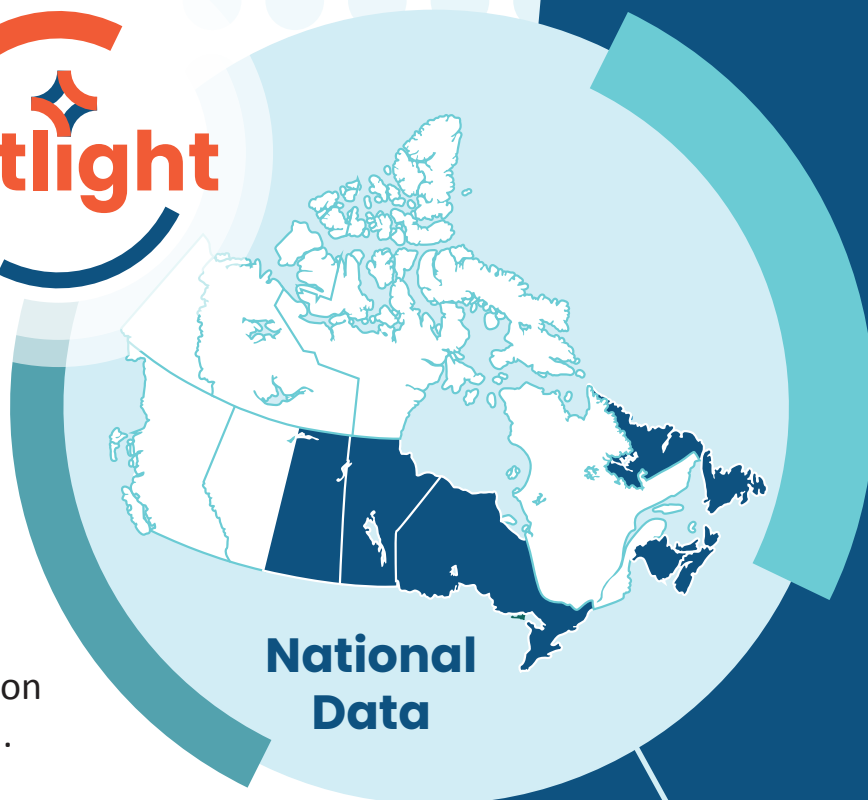
442 Canadian community pharmacies in 7 provinces completed at least one MSSA–CP between January 1 and December 31, 2024

Number of pharmacies (y-axis: 0, 50, 100, 150, 200, 250)

Populaton of Community Served

Very small (> 1,000)	Small (1,000-29,999)	Medium (30,000-99,999)	Large (≥ 100,000)

Weekly Prescription Volume

R$_X$

> 3,000	3%
1,501–3,000	17%
701–1,500	41%
≤ 700	39%

MSSA-CP - **mssa2.ismp-canada.org/comm-pharm-ii**

Key Elements of a Safe Medication System

Patient Engagement and Partnership	**I**
Medication Storage and Handling	**II**
Use of Technology and Devices	**III**
Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement	**IV**
Addressing Known Areas of Risk	**V**
Considerations for Selected Clinical Situations	**VI**
Considerations for Selected High-Alert Medications and Classes	**VII**

Focus on Compliance Packaging

Compliance packaging is offered in many community pharmacies to help patients follow their medication regimen. Multiple steps are involved in preparing and managing compliance packages (or blister packs), which increases the complexity and risk of error in the pharmacy workflow.[1]

Quality Improvement Considerations for Compliance Packaging

- With your team, review the assessment items detailed in Table 1, which relate specifically to compliance packaging, and input your pharmacy's individual MSSA-CP results.
  - Identify assessment items with high scores and celebrate these successes!
  - Recognize opportunities to improve assessment items with scores lower than the aggregate.
- Use the MSSA-CP Action Plan template as a guide to develop and document strategies to improve your pharmacy's assessment item scores.

🌐 **Action plan template** - PDF

TABLE 1.

Assessment Results and Improvement Strategies Related to Compliance Packaging

ASSESSMENT ITEM	IMPROVEMENT STRATEGY

Checking Products from Central Fill

Compliance packages prepared by a central fill location are checked against the patient's medication profile before being released to the patient.

Average score (out of 4)[i,ii]   **1.20**   Your score

Self-Assessment Item 15.3   /4   /4

For the originating pharmacy: Upon receipt of products from the central fill location, have a pharmacist or regulated pharmacy technician check each product against the patient profile (not just the batch fill list). At a minimum, this step should include checking that the number, names, and strengths of the medications received match what was expected.[2]

Verifying Medication Quantity

For manual preparation of compliance packages, a standardized process is followed to verify medication quantity (e.g., precounting medication on a tray, repackaging of medications from previously filled vials).

Average score (out of 4)[i,ii]   **3.08**   Your score

Self-Assessment Item 15.5   /4   /4

Use a tray to precount medications, for quantity verification, before placing medications into compliance packs. Incorporate this requirement into procedures, reminders, and training.[3]

Managing Pack Changes

Pharmacy team members follow a standardized process for managing changes to compliance packs, which includes immediately quarantining any prepared packs until changes are made.

Average score (out of 4)[i,ii]   **3.71**   Your score

Self-Assessment Item 15.2   /4   /4

Sequester prepared compliance packs that require changes in a designated area, until the changes are made.

Develop or review standard operating procedures (SOPs) that address how to manage changes to compliance packs in the middle of a cycle.[4]

Completing Final Check

For manual preparation of compliance packages, a pharmacist or pharmacy technician completes a final check of each package to confirm that medications are correctly located in the pack.

Average score (out of 4)[i,ii]   **3.76**   Your score

Self-Assessment Item 15.6   /4   /4

Use a checklist to perform a systematic final check of the sealed compliance pack, especially to compare the patient's prescription(s) with the medication grid and the medications in the pack.[5] This should be an independent double check by a pharmacist or pharmacy technician who was not involved in the preparation. Alternatively, it can be done as a delayed self-check if the pharmacist is working alone.[3,6]

[i] **MSSA scores are assigned numeric values ranging from 0 (not implemented or not applicable) to 4 (always implemented).**

[ii] The average scores in this table were obtained from 442 community pharmacies, in 7 provinces (Manitoba, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, Ontario, Prince Edward Island, and Saskatchewan), that submitted MSSA-CP data between January 1 and December 31, 2024, inclusive.

How to Use the MSSA-CP for Quality Improvement

1. Complete the MSSA-CP with your pharmacy team, and compare your responses to anonymous aggregate data.

2. Identify lower-scoring core characteristics and assessment items. Highlight key areas for improvement.

3. Brainstorm strategies to improve identified lower-scoring areas.

4. For every strategy, document the following: relevance to patient safety, timeframe for implementation, individual team members' responsibilities, potential barriers and challenges, and steps to monitor progress.

5. Prioritize the action plan in accordance with your team's goals.

6. Take action! Implement outlined strategies to improve medication safety in your community pharmacy.

Action Plan Template
https://ismpcanada.ca/wp-content/uploads/MSSA-Action-Plan-Template-2025.pdf

Community Pharmacy Reporting & Learning
https://ismpcanada.ca/impact/community-pharmacy-reporting-learning/

Online Learning: Medication Safety Considerations for Compliance Packaging
https://ismpcanada.ca/courses/medication-safety-considerations-for-compliance-packaging-updated-version/

The MSSA-CP supports continuous quality improvement (CQI) initiatives in community pharmacies and may be used to meet the requirements of CQI programs in Canadian provinces. The content was developed with support from a pan-Canadian Advisory Panel and includes learning from incidents reported to the National Incident Data Repository for Community Pharmacies (NIDR).

RESOURCES

1. Balancing safety and efficiency in community pharmacy. ISMP Can Saf Bull. 2021 [cited 2025 May 13];21(7):1-4. Available from:
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3. Best practices for compliance packaging. ACP News. 2012 Sep/Oct [cited 2025 Mar 5]:8. Available from:
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5. Tips to prevent medication errors with your blister pack. SafeMedicationUse.ca Newslett. 2015 [cited 2025 Feb 28]; 6(8):1-2. Available from:
https://safemedicationuse.ca/newsletter/downloads/201510NewsletterV6N8BlisterPack.pdf

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https://ismpcanada.ca/bulletin/good-catches-in-community-pharmacies-a-multi-incident-analysis/