SHORTAGES AND OVERAGES

When the count *doesn't match.*

A calm, step-by-step way to find out why a narcotic count came up short or over, write down what you found, and know the same day whether it has to be reported.

1. **Read the line** — Expected against counted
2. **First checks** — Recount, totals, dates, sister DINs
3. **The Detective** — Clues from the line's own records
4. ✓ **Decide & document** — Outcome, note, report if needed

Which way is it off?

- `-2` **Shortage** — you counted less than the records expect.
- `+3` **Overage** — you counted more than the records expect.
- `0` **Balanced** — the shelf and the records agree.

The clock does not wait

- A loss or theft goes to Health Canada within **10 days** of discovering it.
- Investigating never pauses that clock — report, then keep looking.
- An overage is not reported, but it still gets investigated and written down.

INSIDE

2 Read the line 3 First checks 4 Shortages 5 Overages 6 Decide and report

General guidance for Canadian pharmacies, not legal advice. Health Canada's and your provincial regulator's current requirements always govern.

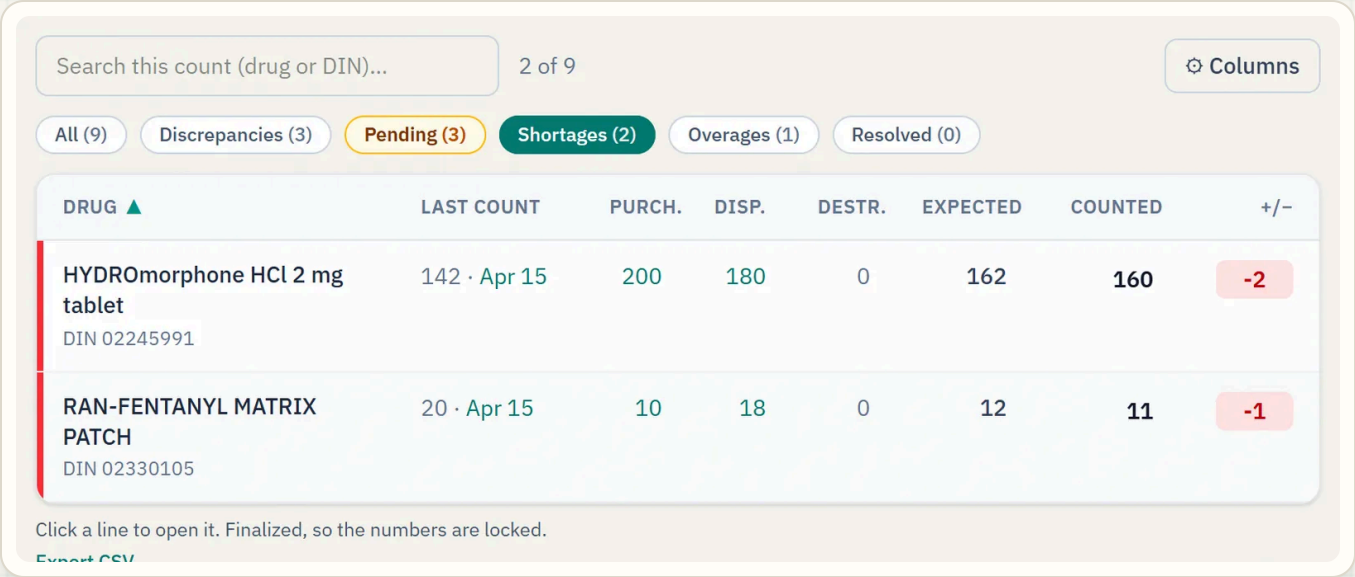
STEP 1 · READ THE LINE

Every line is one *sum.*

Before you look for a cause, read the arithmetic. Each drug on a count is the last count plus everything that came in, minus everything that went out, over one window.

Last count (counted last time) + **Purchased** (received in the window) − **Dispensed** (filled in the window) − **Destroyed** (removed in the window) = **Expected** (what should be there)

Counted (what you found) − **Expected** = **+/−** (the discrepancy)



NARCCOUNT A count filtered to Shortages: hydromorphone expected 162, counted 160, so −2.

THE WINDOW

Purchased, Dispensed and Destroyed are summed from the day **after** the last count up to and **including** this count's date. A record dated on the last count's day belongs to the last count.

EVERY NUMBER OPENS

Click a line to open it: its numbers, history, the Detective, the checklist and the investigation record. Click a Purchased, Dispensed or Destroyed total to see the records behind it.

STEP 2 · FIRST CHECKS, IN THIS ORDER

Six checks before *any conclusion.*

Most discrepancies are a record that is late, doubled, dated a day off or filed under the wrong DIN. Work through these in order; most lines resolve by the fourth.

01
Recount
Count again, in units — tablets, mL, patches. Write the recount down: a miscount you only assume explains nothing.

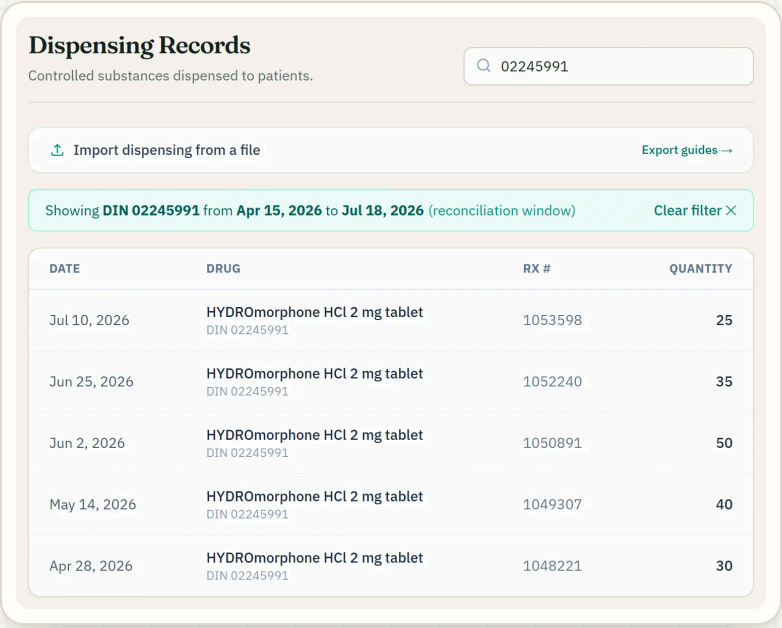
02
Open the three totals
Click Purchased, Dispensed and Destroyed. Look for a missing invoice, a doubled prescription, a destruction never entered.

03
Check the window's edges
Records dated the count day, the day before, or just after: was the stock on the shelf when you counted?

04
Look at the sister DIN
Same molecule and strength from another maker. One line short beside another over is usually one mix-up, not two problems.

05
Read the Detective
It reads the line's own records and lists clues — "Strong clue" or "Worth a look" — each with the checks it maps to.

06
Decide and document
Pick the outcome, write what you did and why, and report it if it is a loss. Page 6 walks through it.



NARCCOUNT Click a Dispensed total: the fills behind it, with Rx numbers.

THE DETECTIVE NEVER DECIDES

Each clue says what **would** explain the line if you confirm it, and one button ticks the matching checks on the line's checklist.

AI TRIAGE LOOKS WIDER

On a whole count it reads every discrepancy together and suggests what to check first. It advises; the pharmacist decides.

STEP 3 · SHORTAGES

Counted *less* than expected.

A record is missing, doubled or a day off — or it is a real loss. The blue line is the Detective clue that points at each.

WHAT YOU SEE	WHAT IT USUALLY MEANS	WHAT TO DO IN NARCCOUNT
Short by exactly one prescription, dated just after the count	It was filled from the shelf before you counted but is dated later.	Confirm the fill date and note it on the line. `"An Rx dated after the count matches the shortage"`
Short by stock pulled for expiry or a recall	A destruction nobody entered.	**Destructions → Add a destruction record**, with who destroyed it and who witnessed it. `"A destruction dated after the count matches the shortage"`
One DIN short, its sister DIN over by about the same	Filled or received under the other DIN.	Document both lines with one explanation; leave the counts as counted. `"An Rx under a sister DIN matches — wrong DIN?"`
Short on a low-dose codeine product	Over-the-counter sales go through the till, not the dispensing system.	**Dispensing → Record a sale or transfer** → Over-the-counter sale. `"Low-dose codeine: over-the-counter sales are not in the dispensing data"`
Short after supplying another pharmacy or returning stock	A transfer out with no prescription behind it.	**Dispensing → Record a sale or transfer.**
Short by one whole invoice	The same invoice was entered twice.	Document it on the line; the record explains the gap. `"An invoice is entered twice"`
Short on a drug that goes into compliance packs	Stock already pulled into packs that are not billed yet.	Count the prepared packs with the shelf stock, or note the quantity until it is billed.
Counted is a fraction of expected — 3 against 300	Bottles were counted, not units.	Recount in units. `"Counted looks like packs, not units"`
Dispensing stops days before the count	The export did not cover the whole window.	Export the missing days and upload them. `"Dispensing records stop before the count"`
Last count was over by about the same amount	Last time's overage is coming back.	Look at both counts together and note the link on each. `"Last count's overage is now a shortage"`
Nothing explains it	A possible loss or theft.	Report it to Health Canada within 10 days of discovery — page 6.

STEP 4 · OVERAGES

Counted *more* than expected.

Something arrived without a record, a fill is doubled, or stock went back on the shelf. Not reported to Health Canada — but still a record out of step.

WHAT YOU SEE	WHAT IT USUALLY MEANS	WHAT TO DO IN NARCCOUNT
Over by a whole pack — 100, 500	A delivery that is not in your wholesaler file: a central fill, an emergency supply, or an invoice not uploaded yet.	**Purchases → Record a purchase**, or upload the missing invoice. `"The difference is exactly 1 of 100"`
Over by one prescription	Billed but never picked up and put back on the shelf, or a claim reversed.	Reverse it in the dispensing system and note it on the line. `"A prescription is the same size as the overage"`
Over by an Rx that appears twice on one day	The same fill was recorded twice.	Document it on the line; the record explains the gap. `"An Rx is billed twice on the same day"`
Over, with an invoice dated after the count	The delivery arrived before you counted, but its invoice is dated later.	Press **Receiving** on the line and enter the day it arrived. `"An invoice dated after the count matches the overage"`
One DIN over, its sister DIN short	Filled or received under the other DIN.	Document both lines with one explanation. `"A sister line is off the other way"`
Over by stock you already recorded as destroyed	Expired stock set aside, still on site, and counted.	Don't count quarantined stock, or date the destruction on the day it actually left. `"A destruction is the same size as the overage"`
Last count was short by about the same amount	Last time's shortage is reversing.	Look at both counts together and note the link on each. `"Last count's shortage is now an overage"`
Nothing explains it	An unexplained overage.	Record it as unexplained and keep looking — it can hide an outflow.

WHY AN OVERAGE STILL MATTERS

An overage on this count often becomes a shortage on the next one. Find the record that is out of step and write it down now.

STEP 5 · DECIDE, DOCUMENT, REPORT

Close every line *on the record.*

Open the line and fill in its investigation record: what happened, the checks you ticked, the cause, what you did, and one outcome. Every save is kept as a new version, and the record prints with the count report.

Resolved — count error corrected
A recount or a corrected entry closed the gap. Fix the counted number too.

Count under — explained *(no reporting required)*
For example an Rx not yet billed, an invoice not entered, a unit mix-up. The stock is accounted for.

Count under — unexplained *(report loss)*
You looked and cannot explain it by normal business. That is a loss.

`Report within 10 days`

Theft / suspected diversion — report
Stock removed without consent: a break-in, pilferage, a forged prescription that was filled.

`Report within 10 days`

Overage — explained *(no reporting required)*
More on the shelf than the records say, and you found why.

Overage — unexplained *(no reporting required)*
More on the shelf and you can't say why. Not reported — but it can hide an outflow.

When it must be reported

A loss or theft of a controlled substance is reported to Health Canada in writing within 10 days of becoming aware of it (Controlled Substances Regulations, s. 109(2), in force 1 October 2026). Every theft is reportable, whatever the amount. A loss is reportable when there is no reasonable explanation from normal business. A documented miscount is not; an assumed one is. Overages are not reported. Ontario's College expects thefts to be reported to the police as well.

NarcCount fills in the form

From the count, the loss report pre-fills Health Canada's Loss or Theft Report Form with the drug, the quantity and the dates. You check it and send it — the pharmacist stays responsible for what is filed.

Questions?

support@narccount.ca · every guide at **narccount.ca/help**