

New Brunswick Department of Health

Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Guidance for Community Pharmacies

March 18, 2020

Note: This guidance provides basic information only. It is not intended to take the place of medical advice, diagnosis or treatment.

What you need to know

- Community pharmacies can play an important role in supporting the response to suspected cases of COVID-19 and in preventing the spread of the virus.
- Stockpiling of prescription medication by patients beyond a 30-day supply is **not recommended**. This will help ensure that shortages of drugs are not experienced.
- It is important to take the proper precautions in community pharmacies to protect both staff and clients

General Advice to Pharmacies

- There are several things that pharmacies can do to prevent themselves, their staff, and patients from becoming sick with this virus:
 - Post signage on entrance to pharmacy area informing persons to self-identify if they are experiencing fever and/or cough or difficulty breathing and have a travel history in the last 14 days or have had contact with a person who has the above travel history and illness symptoms (see screening procedures below). Similar messaging should be communicated on telephone messages and websites.
 - If supplies are available, have procedure/surgical masks, tissues, waste container and alcohol-based hand sanitizer available to patients and staff in pharmacies.
 - Review infection prevention and control/occupational health and safety policies and procedures with staff. For example, staff should not come to work when they are sick.
 - For additional information on infection prevention and control, please refer to the Public Health Agency of Canada website: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/infectious-diseases/nosocomial-occupational-infections/routine-practices-additional-precautions-preventing-transmission-infection-healthcare-settings.html>

Screening

- Pharmacies should undertake active screening (asking questions about symptoms and travel/exposures) and passive screening (signage) of patients for COVID-19.
- All patients should be screened over the phone before arriving at the pharmacy whenever possible.

Sample Screening

Is the patient presenting with:

Fever, and/or new onset of cough or difficulty breathing,

AND any of the following:

Has travelled internationally in the 14 days before the onset of illness **OR**
Close contact with a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19 **OR** Close
contact with a person with acute respiratory illness who has travelled
internationally in the 14 days before their symptom onset.

If a patient screens as a suspect case over the phone:

- the patient should be advised to call Telecare 811 for further guidance.
- The patient should get someone from outside of their household to pick up any necessary medications; or
- the pharmacy should arrange for the delivery of medications, if this service is available.
- The medication should be delivered to the patient by either of the means above without direct contact with the patient (e.g. placed in mailbox).

If a patient presents in person and self-identifies as meeting criteria for COVID-19:

- A patient who presents at a community pharmacy and self-identifies as meeting the screening criteria for COVID-19 needs to be separated from other patients and staff so that they are at least 2 meters apart (use a separate room where available) and given a surgical/procedure mask if available.

- Pharmacy staff should avoid close contact with a patient who self-identifies.
 - o When droplet and contact precautions are in place, patients should be given a procedure mask and placed in a room with the door closed to avoid contact with other patients in common area of the pharmacy.
 - o Patients can be referred to the COVID Community Assessment Centers by calling 811 where appropriate and advise client to self isolate at home.
 - o Pharmacists could consult with public health to discuss the need for the most appropriate setting for testing.
 - The following are hyperlinks to local Public Health Offices:
 - [Public Health Region 1 \(Moncton\)](#)
 - [Public Health Region 2 \(Saint John\)](#)
 - [Public Health Region 3 \(Fredericton\)](#)
 - [Public Health Region 4 \(Edmundston\)](#)
 - [Public Health Region 5 \(Campbellton\)](#)
 - [Public Health Region 6 \(Bathurst\)](#)
- Patient-contact surfaces (i.e., surfaces within 2 meters of the patient who has self-identified) should be cleaned and disinfected as soon as possible. When choosing an environmental cleaning product, it is important to follow product instructions for dilution, contact time and safe use, and to ensure that the product is registered in Canada with a Drug Identification Number (DIN) and labelled as a broad-spectrum virucide.

If a patient who presents is not a suspect case:

If a patient does not screen as a probable case, they **should not** be directed to call Telecare 811 but rather should be referred to the Government of New Brunswick website for more information.

Renewal, Extensions and Emergency Refills of Prescriptions

The best available information on the COVID-19 virus suggests that older people and those with pre-existing conditions should limit their potential exposure by remaining at home as much as possible. These patients may therefore seek early fills and / or deliveries of prescriptions to enable self-isolation. In addition, pharmacies may use their judgement and the options available to them to reduce non-essential physician visits, including those for prescriptions renewals.

Pharmacists should not hesitate to provide emergency fills, particularly in the case of expired prescriptions that would otherwise require a prescriber visit.

Worker Safety

- Pharmacies should have written measures and procedures for worker safety, developed in consultation with the joint health and safety committee or health and safety representative including measures and procedures for infection prevention and control.
- Signage should be posted at the point of entry to the pharmacy and at reception areas for patients with symptoms and a relevant exposure history to self-identify, perform hand hygiene, wear a procedure/surgical mask, and have access to tissues and a waste receptacle.

For More Information on COVID-19

For more information on COVID-19, please consult the Department of Health's website on COVID-19 at www.gnb.ca.

For all other questions related to pharmacy practice, pharmacists should contact the New Brunswick College of Pharmacists.